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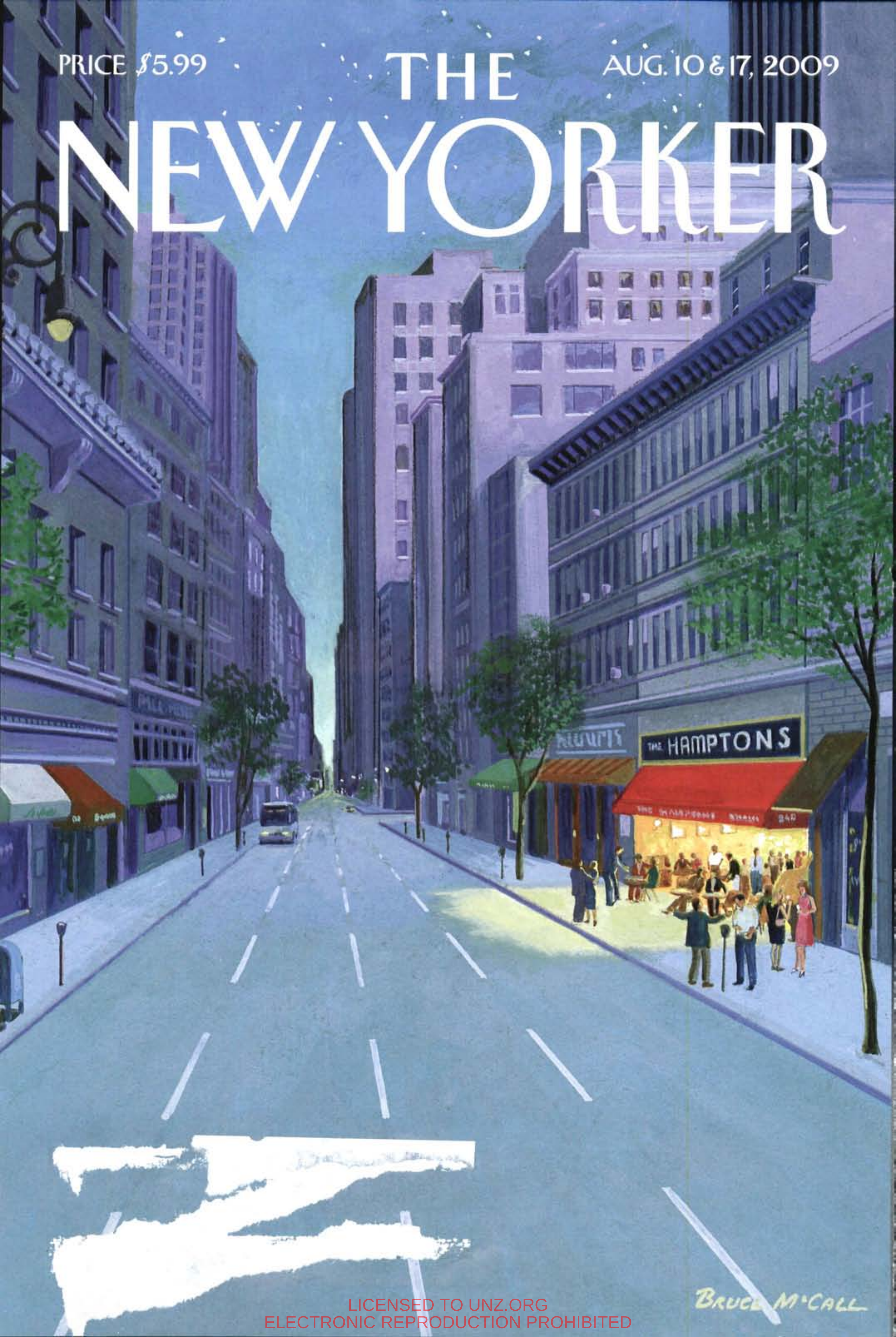
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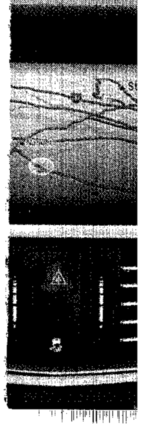

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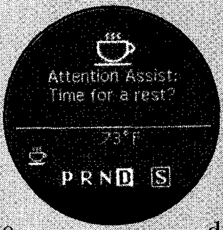

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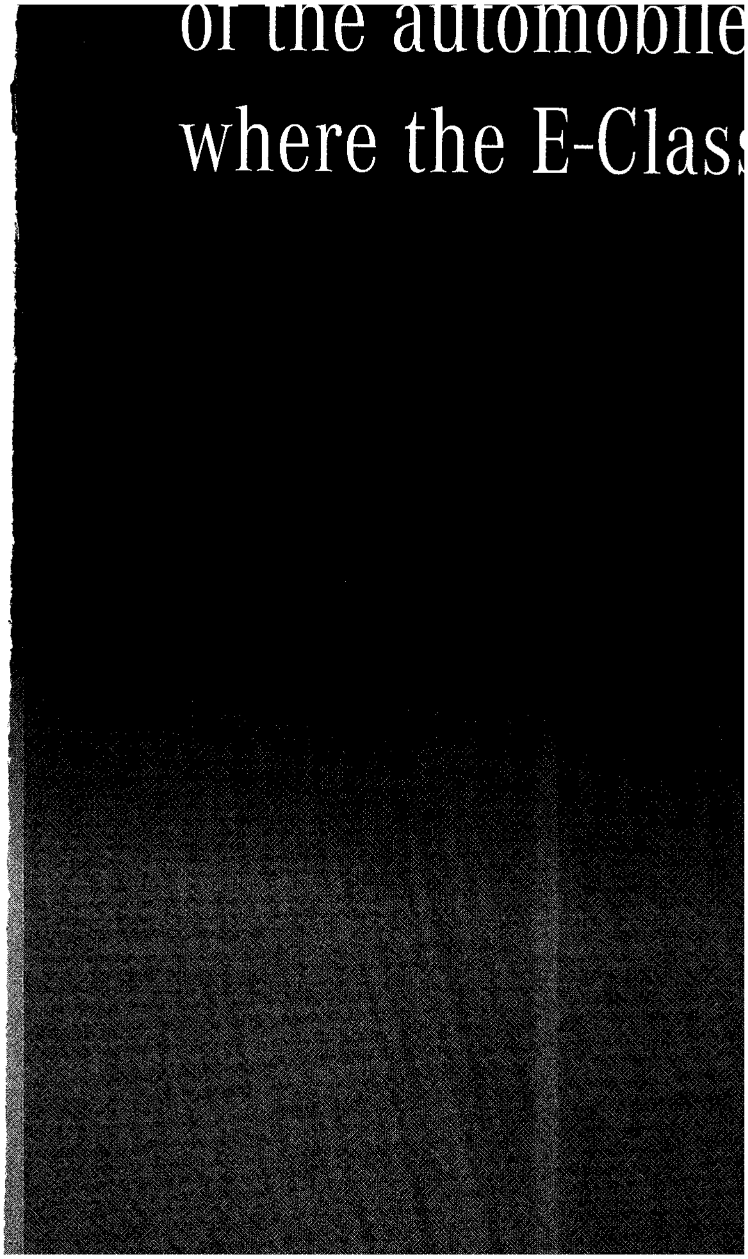
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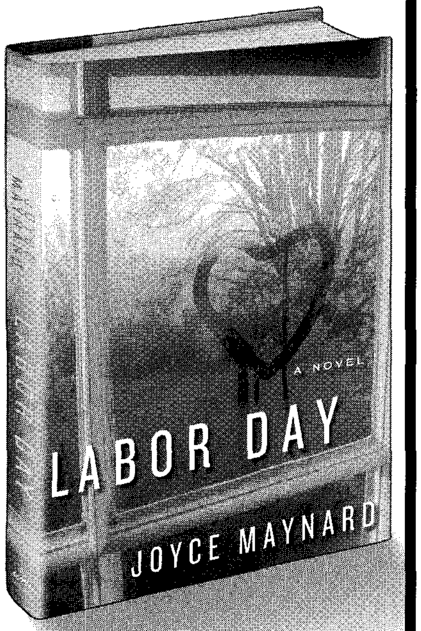

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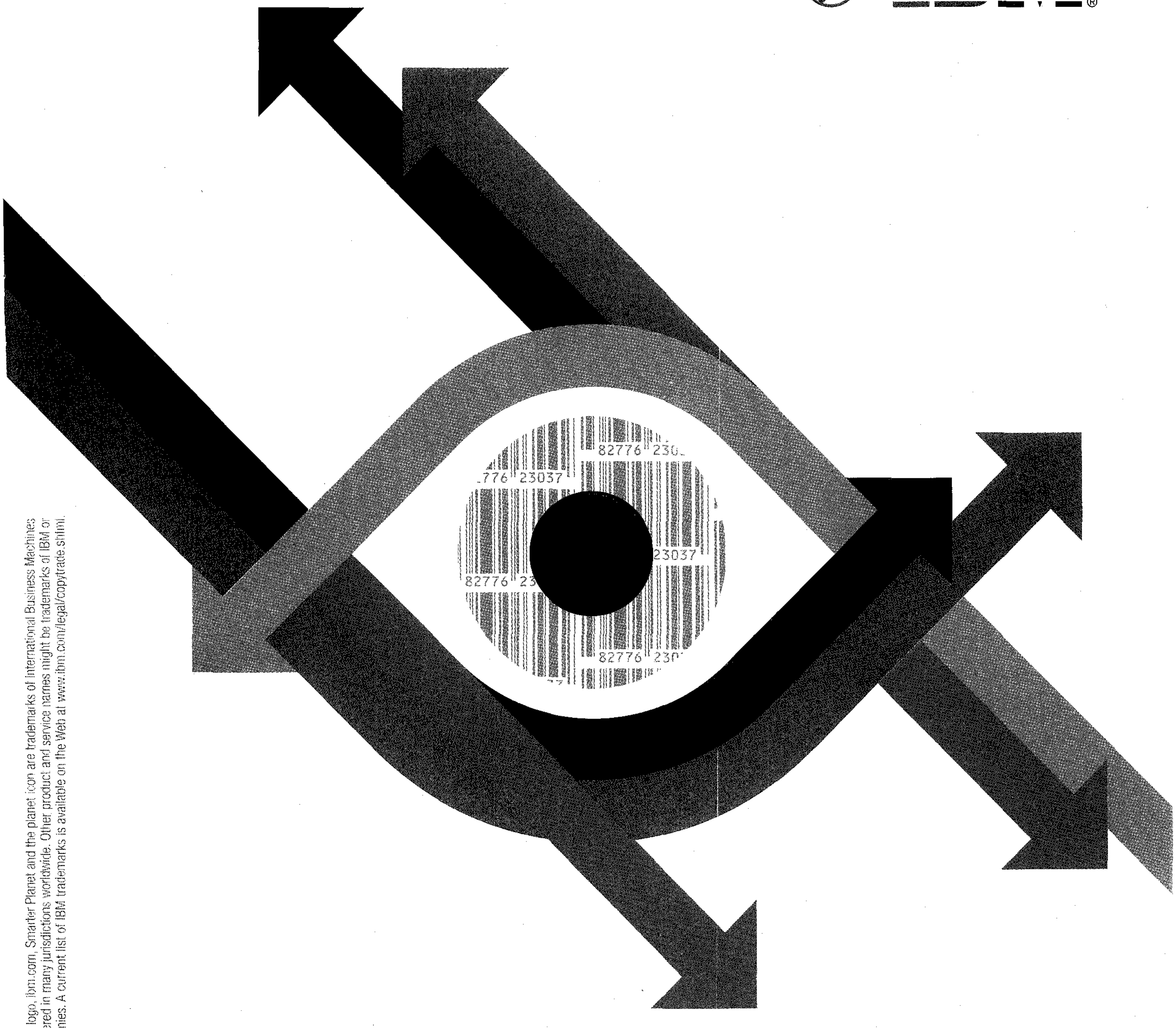

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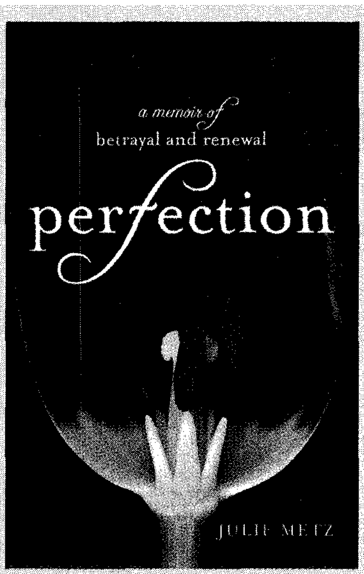

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CONTRIBUTORS

Malcolm Gladwell ("The Courthouse Ring," p. 26) has published three books, including, most recently, "Outliers: The Story of Success."

Kelefa Sanneh (Comment, p. 21) is a staff writer.

Tad Friend (The Talk of the Town, p. 23) has a new book, "Cheerful Money," a family memoir, which will be published in September.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 25) contributes a regular column on economics and business affairs. He is the author of "The Wisdom of Crowds," which is available in paperback.

John Seabrook ("The Price of the Ticket," p. 34) is a staff writer and the author of "A Flash of Genius: And Other True Stories of Invention."

Zev Borow (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 33) writes for film and television.

Kay Ryan (Poem, p. 39) is the Poet Laureate of the United States. Her new collection of poems, "The Best of It," will be published next spring.

Bruce McCall (Cover) has been contributing to the magazine since 1979. "Marveltown" is his most recent book.

Ian Frazier ("Travels in Siberia—II," p. 44) is the author of nine books, including "Lamentations of the Father," a collection of essays. His new book, "Travels in Siberia," will be published next year. This is the second part of a two-part article.

David Harsent (Poem, p. 56), a poet and librettist, won the 2005 Forward Prize for "Legion," his eighth book of poems.

Sherman Alexie (Fiction, p. 64) won a 2007 National Book Award for his novel "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian." "War Dances," a collection of short stories, will be published in October.

Judith Thurman (A Critic at Large, p. 74) is a staff writer. Her book of essays, "Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire," is available in paperback.

Sharon Olds (Poem, p. 78) has published several collections of poems, including "Strike Sparks: Selected Poems, 1980-2002" and "One Secret Thing."

Alex Ross (Musical Events, p. 82) received an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music in May.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 84) is the magazine's television critic.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Audio: *Ryan Lizza*, *Evan Osnos*, *Laura Secor*, and *Dorothy Wickenden* on Obama, China, and Iran; *Ian Frazier* on Siberia. / Audio slide show: *Seamus Murphy* on his photographs of the Russian Far East. / Video: *Jorge Colombo's* phone sketches; *Richard Brody's* DVD of the Week. / Ask the Author: *Judith Thurman* talks to readers about the Wilders. / Blogs: *George Packer* on politics, *James Surowiecki* on the economy, *Amy Davidson's* Close Read, plus the Book Bench, the Cartoon Lounge, Goings On, and the Front Row. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a complete archive of issues, back to 1925.

THE MAIL

A HEALTHY WEIGHT

As a contributor to "The Fat Studies Reader" (I'm a novelist and no expert), I can assure Elizabeth Kolbert that the book is not about the notion "that putting on weight is a subversive act" (Books, July 20th). Rather, it is an attempt to move outside the cultural obsession with fatness. Doing so creates a profound shift in perspective which can intensify, not diminish, a commitment to things like better school-lunch programs, more public parks, and interventions in the links between economic status and health which focus on things like adequate access to medical care, clean water, and decent food—things other than weight.
Susan Stinson
Northampton, Mass.

Kolbert seems to argue that, as the average weight of the population has risen in the past few decades, there must be a corresponding decrease in the health of the population. On the contrary, longevity continues to rise each year, and the incidence of death from heart disease continues to fall. More people live active, healthy lives well into their eighties and nineties than ever have before. If fatness were not reviled but simply accepted as one of many variable human characteristics, the obvious question would be: Why are we living longer? Kolbert cites the work of the C.D.C.'s Katherine Flegal, whose research has shown that the segment of the population who live the longest are not the thinnest, or even those at what doctors call "ideal" weight. Instead, against expectations, those in the overweight category have shown consistently greater longevity than those who are thinner. Those at the extremes—the very thin and the very fat—showed a decrease in life span.
Miriam Berg, President
Council on Size & Weight Discrimination
Mt. Marion, N.Y.

Kolbert's conclusion underlies the need to introduce eating competence, best defined as a biopsychosocial approach to eating which addresses issues related to food choice and eating behavior. My research has shown that competent eaters consume more fruits and vegetables and eat a more nutritious diet, are at less risk for cardiovascular disease, and are less likely to be overweight or dissatisfied with their body weight. Instead of teaching portion size and right and wrong foods, it seems vital to focus instead on enjoying food—to tune in to body sensations, to try new foods, and to know how to plan and cook meals.
Barbara Lohse
Associate Professor, Nutritional Sciences
Pennsylvania State University
State College, Pa.

I SPY?

For the most part, Nicholas Lemann seems to accept the thesis of John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr that the notes that the journalist Alexander Vassiliev took on Soviet files close the door to Alger Hiss's claim that he was not a spy for the Soviets (Books, July 27th). Yet, for those of us concerned with this case, it is extremely troubling that Vassiliev was given only certain files, and that Haynes and Klehr's interpretation of those notes is so dubious. The authors also ignore the discrepancies between the stories they glean from Vassiliev's notes and those told by Whittaker Chambers and Hede Massing, two of Hiss's principal accusers. Lemann questions Haynes and Klehr's use of the evidence that I.F. Stone was a K.G.B. operative; it seems unfair to then assume that they are more evenhanded when it comes to Hiss.
Jeff Kisseloff
Managing Editor, algerhiss.com
New Paltz, N.Y.

•

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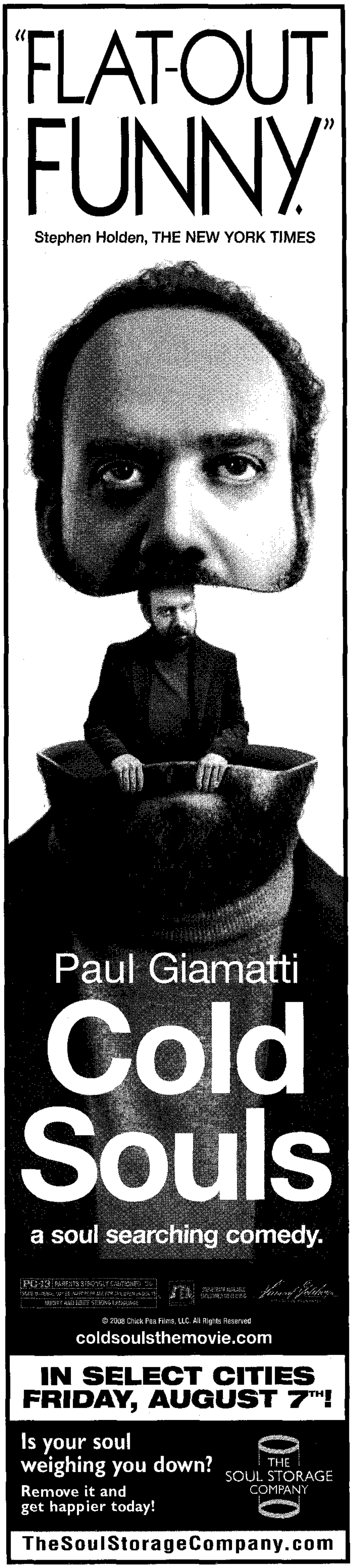
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
OLD SCHOOL

Modelled on the dawn-of-rock-and-roll package tours, in which acts such as Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash hit the road in a unified caravan, "The Big Surprise Tour" is a blockbuster revue of contemporary Americana and roots music. It brings the Old Crow Medicine Show, the Dave Rawlings Machine (featuring Gillian Welch), the Felice Brothers, and Justin Townes Earle to the Beacon Theatre. (See page 9.)

ART
EARTHLY DELIGHTS

In the summer, the Cloisters, the Metropolitan Museum's medieval branch, in Fort Tryon Park, offers tours of its gardens Tuesdays through Sundays, in addition to weekly talks. On Aug. 15 at noon and 2, the plant historian Deirdre Larkin discusses "The Garden and the Queen of Heaven." (See page 11.)

DANCE
ASPHALT PASTORAL

More than any other hip-hop choreographer, Rennie Harris demonstrates that there's something to be gained by moving the dance form out of the clubs and onto the stage. His troupe, Puremovement, brings North Philadelphia to the bucolic setting of Jacob's Pillow. (See page 13.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH

"Beer and Beethoven," a concert that combines the refined playing of the Daedalus Quartet and the hearty pleasures of Belgian-style beer from Brewery Ommegang, a local company, is one of several events offered by the Cooperstown Chamber Music Festival this month. (See page 14.)

MOVIES
THE EYE HAS IT

Five of the toughest and best directors in Hollywood had only one eye. Anthology Film Archives highlights this strange bit of trivia with a mini-retrospective of films by John Ford, Fritz Lang, Raoul Walsh, Nicholas Ray, and André de Toth, including such rare treats as de Toth's "Pitfall," Lang's "You and Me," Walsh's "The Tall Men," and Ray's "The True Story of Jesse James." (See page 18.)

The Drawing Center and River to River's "Big Draw." Photograph by Lisa Kereszi.

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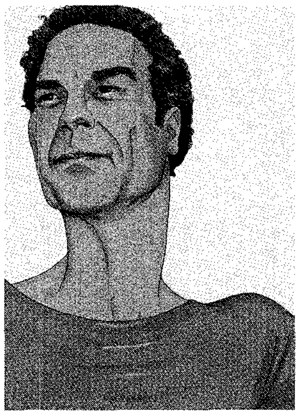
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
OBJECT LESSON

Merce Cunningham's signal achievement is that he established modernism—abstraction, decentralization—in dance. In consequence, some people loathed his work, thought it was a prank. Which meant, of course, that others were required to like it. If you didn't support it, stump for it, you were giving comfort to the philistines. Late last month, Cunningham died in his sleep, at the age of ninety. Now, perhaps, audiences will be able to think about him more clearly. The tremendous beauty of his work was its objectivity. John Cage, his partner in life and art, said that what he and Cunningham were aiming for was "the imitation of nature in the manner of her operation." In a meadow, a bird flies in one direction, a rabbit runs in another. So it was on Cunningham's stage. This seeming lack of coercion focussed the mind on the individual dancer, and the cell of movement. Cunningham's work, like no other, made your brain feel clean. You seemed to be seeing dance for the first time.

—*Joan Acocella*



LARA TOMLIN

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AFTER LUKE / WHEN I WAS GOD
Irish Rep presents two plays by Cónal Creedon, set in present-day Ireland, both about fathers and sons. In previews. Opens Aug. 6. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

AL'S BUSINESS CARDS
Josh Koenigsberg wrote this comedy, about a business-card mixup that causes calamity in the life of an enterprising New Jersey man. Lauren Keating directs. In previews. Opens Aug. 9. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE BACCHAE
For the final Shakespeare in the Park production, JoAnne Akalaitis directs Euripides' tragedy, in which the government tries to outlaw desire. Philip Glass composed the original choral score; the cast includes Andre De Shields, Jonathan Groff, Karen Kandel, George Bartenieff, and Rocco Sisto. Previews begin Aug. 11. (Delacorte, Central Park, enter at 81st St. and Central Park W. For information, call 212-539-8750.)

A LIFETIME BURNING
Primary Stages celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with a season of works by female playwrights, beginning with a world première by Cusi Cram, in which two sisters clash after one of them falsifies her memoir. Starring Jennifer Westfeldt, Raul Castillo, Isabel Keating, and Christina Kirk. Pam MacKinnon directs. In previews. Opens Aug. 11. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

MAN OR MCENROE
Farmers for Flight Attendants presents this comedy, in which two actors fight over who would better play the role of the tennis champ John McEnroe. Aug. 6-8. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
Hip to Hip Theatre Company presents the Shakespeare comedy in several parks across the city, including the lovely Socrates Sculpture Park. Aug. 12-16. (Various locations. For a full schedule, visit www.hiptohip.org.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
Highlights of the annual festival showcasing up-and-coming theatre artists and experimental works include Madrid's Yllana Theatre Company, with "666"; Baby Wants Candy's "Baby Wants Candy the Completely Improvised Musical with Full Band"; "Harold Pinter Pair" ("The Lover" and "Ashes to Ashes"), directed by Patrick McNulty; "Abraham Lincoln's Big, Gay Dance Party," written by Aaron Loeb; Mike Schlitt's "Jesus Ride"; and Andrew Unterberg's "The Crow Mill." For a full schedule, visit www.fringenyc.org. Opens Aug. 14. (Various locations. 866-468-7619.)

NOW PLAYING

BURN THE FLOOR
The Broadway season kicks off with this showcase of ballroom and Latin dance, conceived, directed, and choreographed by Jason Gilkison, starring Maksim Chmerkovskiy and Karina Smirnoff, of "Dancing with the Stars" fame. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

EAST VILLAGE THEATER FESTIVAL
The inaugural festival presented by Metropolitan Playhouse, focussing on the culture of the downtown neighborhood, includes new short plays, solo performances, and panel discussions. (220 E. 4th St. 212-995-5302.)

ICE FACTORY FESTIVAL
With summer-festival season in full swing, don't neglect SoHo Think Tank's sixteenth annual lineup. July brought new works by Anonymous Ensemble (a mixed-media take on Lewis Carroll), Aztec Economy (a punk-rock play about a graphic artist), and International WOW (an interactive meditation on the housing crisis). The Little Lord Fauntleroys staged a perverted spin on "Babes in Toyland," adapted from the 1903 libretto, which followed the romantic trials of Contrary Mary (Laura von Holt) and featured the reliably droll David Greenspan as both the woman who lives in a shoe and a toymaker with a poison fetish. Coming up: "Conni's Avant Garde Restaurant" (Aug. 5-8), which includes a five-course meal, and "Space/Space" (Aug. 12-15), an intergalactic psychodrama from Banana Bag & Bodice. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 15.)

LYRIC IS WAITING
South Ark Stage and Kef Productions present a play by Michael Puzzo, about a young couple's tumultuous relationship, directed by Adam Fitzgerald. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE PIED PIPERS OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE
In the Amoralists' revival of this 2007 comedy, written by the group's co-founder Derek Ahonen, a hyperliberal commune of young, pansexual utopianists is ripped apart when a member's strait-laced brother and a suspiciously benevolent landlord pay a couple of ill-timed visits to their Lower East Side love nest. What this nearly three-hour dose of high-energy Steppenwolf-style realism is doing at the avant-garde haven P.S. 122 is anyone's guess. But the young company's deep commitment and contagious exuberance—marred only by an eagerness to turn every scene into a screaming match, a handful of borderline overly passionate performances, and an extended instance of nearly gratuitous full-frontal nudity—bring to mind the vitality that distinguished the early Off Off Broadway work of artists like Sam Shepard only a generation ago. (First Ave. at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Through Aug. 17.)

SLIPPING
Kirsten Kelly directs a drama, by Daniel Talbott, about a high-school senior who moves from San Francisco to Iowa, where he becomes obsessed with a popular jock. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

SUMMER SHORTS 3
The annual festival includes "Things My Afro Taught Me," by Nancy Giles, "A Second of Pleasure," by Neil LaBute, and William Inge's "The Killing," which has never been produced before. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

TALLY HO!, OR NAVIGATING THE FUTURE
Theatre for the New City's Street Theatre Company presents an itinerant musical, with a book and lyrics by Crystal Field and music by David Tice, about a pair of accountants weathering the financial crisis. For locations and schedule, visit www.theaterforthenewcity.net. (Various locations. 212-254-1109.)

WILDFLOWER
As part of its "Uptown Series," which cultivates emerging talent, Second Stage presents Lila Rose Kaplan's play about the sexual awakening of five quirky strangers in a small town one summer. Erica (Nadia Bowers), newly divorced, has dragged her awkward amateur botanist of a son (Jake O'Connor) to Crested Butte, Colorado—famous for its lush flora—where she's picked up temp work as a tourist-hot-line operator. When she is wooed by a local forest ranger (Quincy Dunn-Baker) and her son falls for her college-bound supervisor (Renée Felice Smith), they begin to drift apart, only to come together in the wake of a tabloid-style tragedy. Unfortunately, the drama is too overgrown with talky strained humor, overpronounced emotions, and paint-by-numbers characterizations—if only Kaplan had been more adept at weeding. Giovanna Sardelli directs. (McGinn/Cazale, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-246-4422. Through Aug. 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

BARD SUMMERSCAPE
The Spiegeltent returns to the Bard College campus, with appearances by Justin Bond, Cynthia Hopkins, Taylor Mac, the Bindlestiff Family

Cirkus, the Wau Wau Sisters, and the roller-skating comic Amy G. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900.)

BAY STREET THEATRE
Ray Roderick directs the musical "Dames at Sea," opening Aug. 11. For more information, visit www.baystreet.org. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
At the Unicorn, Ralph Petillo directs "Candide," through Aug. 15. On the Main Stage, Warner Shook directs Neil Simon's "Prisoner of Second Avenue," starring Veanne Cox, through Aug. 8; beginning Aug. 11, Anders Cato directs Ibsen's "Ghosts." For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the grounds of Boscobel, Terrence O'Brien directs Shakespeare's "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," in repertory with "Much Ado About Nothing" and "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)." For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
On the Main Stage through Aug. 9, the actor Dylan Baker directs George Kelly's "The Torch-Bearers," a theatre-troupe farce set in the twenties, with a cast that includes Becky Ann Baker, Yusef Bulos, Katie Finneran, Jessica Hecht, Edward Herrmann, and Dana Ivey. Beginning Aug. 12, Maria Aitken directs Simon Gray's "Quartermaine's Terms." On the Nikos Stage, Amanda Charlton directs the world première of Melinda Lopez's comic drama "Caroline in Jersey," starring Lea Thompson. For more information, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **THE LITTLE MERMAID:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **MARY STUART:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Through Aug. 16. **NEXT FALL:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Aug. 8. **NEXT TO NORMAL:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **9 TO 5: THE MUSICAL:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-239-6200. **OUR TOWN:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **ROCK OF AGES:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **RUINED:** City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **SHREK THE MUSICAL:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **SWEET STORM:** Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Aug. 16. **THE 39 STEPS:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TIN PAN ALLEY RAG:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **THE TOXIC AVENGER:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **VANITIES:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through Aug. 9. **WEST SIDE STORY:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (800-745-3000)—Aug. 5: **Chris Isaak's** "Wicked Game," from 1990, featured prominently in David Lynch's "Wild at Heart," and it became his breakout hit. Isaak's cool, atmospheric rockabilly style and his uncanny vocal homage to Roy Orbison never lose their appeal. Aug. 6: "The Big Surprise Tour" brings in the **Old Crow Medicine Show,** the **Dave Rawlings Machine** (featuring **Gillian Welch**), the **Felice Brothers,** and **Justin Townes Earle.** Each act will play two ninety-minute sets, weaving together their own material, music by the other groups, and anything else that might occur to them. Earle, a relative newcomer, is the son of the alt-country hero Steve Earle, and his graceful second album, "Midnight at the Movies," has just been released.

BROOKLYN ELECTRONIC MUSIC FESTIVAL
Aug. 8: This expertly curated celebration, now in its second year, features the best and the brightest of New York's electronic-music scene. This year, the festival takes over the Old American Can Factory, a nineteenth-century building in Gowanus that's now home to an assortment of artists, designers, and other businesses. Performers at the all-day festival include the **Juan Maclean, Shy Child, Designer Drugs,** and many other acts. (232 3rd St., Brooklyn. For more information, visit www.brooklynemf.com.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 69th St. (212-360-2777)—Aug. 10: For more than thirty years, the rock iconoclast Chrissie Hynde has fronted the **Pretenders,** displaying her heartfelt songwriting and rollicking rock chops. The band's latest album, "Break Up the Concrete," finds Hynde in fine form, adding elements of rockabilly to her time-tested formula. In a benefit for City Parks Foundation, the Pretenders are joined by the Hynde acolytes **Cat Power** and **Juliette Lewis.**

THE MARKET HOTEL
1142 Myrtle Ave., at Broadway, Brooklyn (No phone)—**Publicist** is the brainchild of the vegan Argentinean drummer Sebastian Thomson, from the band Trans Am. Lately, he's been collaborating with Ian Svenonius, the founder of Nation of Ulysses and the Make-Up. Svenonius is a public dissident of sorts, known not only for his work in the D.C. music scene during the past twenty years but also for his incendiary, if tongue-in-cheek, cultural criticism and his hilarious online interview show, "Soft Focus," which borrows as much from Gary Indiana as it does from Johnny Carson. The two present their populist disco-funk act here on Aug. 15.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
Aug. 7: Moshi Moshi Records, an independent English label (Bloc Party, Hot Chip, Architecture in Helsinki, and Au Revoir Simone are among its acts), marks its tenth anniversary with shows by three of its newest artists. Norway's **Casiokids,** who recently performed in a hot-air balloon, craft playful electronic pop songs with classic keyboard sounds. The U.K.'s **Wave Pictures,** a gawky and lyrically driven three-piece outfit, make music that swirls with wordplay and wit. Their stripped-down aesthetic recalls that of the Modern Lovers and the enchanted psychedelic folk of the Incredible String Band. The energetic folk duo **Slow Club,** also from England, rounds out the bill. (South Street Seaport.) Aug. 14: After seven years of playing sprawling psychedelic rock for the Texas band the Secret Machines, the guitarist Benjamin Curtis abruptly quit that stentorian trio and hooked up with the identical-twin-sister vocalists Alejandra and Claudia Deheza to form the **School of Seven Bells.** Specializing in dreamy electronic pop, the new band retains the hazy drone of Curtis's former outfit but swaps its muscular rock elements for the Dehezas' soaring, ethereal harmonies. (South Street Seaport). (For more information, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

SANTOS PARTY HOUSE
96 Lafayette St. (212-584-5492)—Aug. 5: The Italian star **Jovanotti** (Lorenzo Cherubini), who sings in

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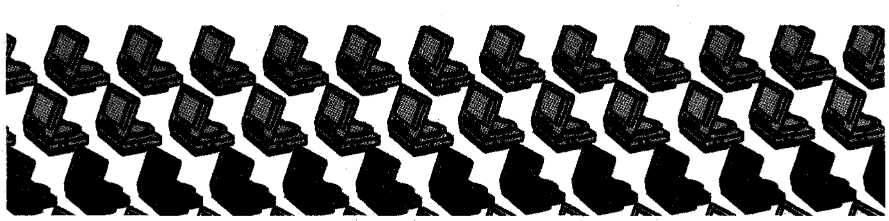

STEVE POWERS

DVD NOTES
MAD MEN, SAD MEN

The stifled rage of middle-class, middle-aged ennui is on view as early as the opening credits of John Cassavetes's **"Husbands"** (Sony), which call the film "a comedy about life, death, and freedom." Cassavetes had to cut the film by nearly an hour and a half to get it down to the contractual length of a hundred and forty minutes, but Columbia, the studio that produced the film, nonetheless cut another eleven minutes (restored in this DVD) during its first run, in 1970, in response to negative reviews (including one from Pauline Kael, in this magazine) and audience walkouts. Unsurprisingly, the troubled reception signals the film's virtues: this formally radical, deeply personal work still packs plenty of surprises.

The story centers on three longtime friends, neighbors on Long Island and fellow-commuters—Gus (Cassavetes), Archie (Peter Falk), and Harry (Ben Gazzara)—whose buddy Stuart has died suddenly. After the funeral, they go on a two-day bender. Returning home, Harry has a violent row with his wife (Meta Shaw) and his mother-in-law (Lorraine MacMartin) and decides to fly off to London that day. Fearing for Harry's well-being, Archie and Gus accompany him. Once there, the three go to a casino and end up bringing women back to their hotel rooms. The drama turns on a simple question: whether any of them will go home.

Suspicious of women and alienated from work, these suburban family men are aging angrily and yearn for the freedom and the strength of youth. Despite their white-collar prosperity, they have trouble containing the coarse energy of their origins. Cassavetes built these characters around the real-life ways of the actors who played them, filled the story with incidents from his own life, and wrote the dialogue after improvising with Gazzara and Falk. In the actors' richly theatrical performances—with their hair-trigger emotional outbursts and verbal barrages, their singing, dancing, clowning, and roughhousing—these long-repressed characters' teeming, manifold identities burst out.

Cassavetes also reveals surprising depth in minor characters, one of the best of whom is featured in the restored footage: Red (John Kullers), a grizzled businessman whose renditions of "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" and a streetwise ditty about Brooklyn help set the tone for the film. The remaining eighty-five minutes that Cassavetes had to cut remain only a dream.

—Richard Brody

a rich baritone and raps with a quick tongue, has had a long career. Wrapping up a downtown summer residency in which he's been working on new material at small clubs, he breaks it out here in style. Aug. 8: For more than a decade, **Dominick Fernow** has established himself as the undisputed king of harsh noise music and power electronics through his one-man act, Prurient. He is also the founder of Hospital Productions, a record label and a specialty record store that trafficks strictly in black-metal and noise music and is housed in the basement of a nondescript building on East Third Street in Manhattan. **Cold Cave,** a remarkable up-and-coming synth-based noise-pop group from Philadelphia, opens the show.

Elizabeth Soychak in the Renegade Cabaret, a spontaneous entertainment on a fire escape at the northern tip of the High Line.

RUTH GWILY

SILENT BARN
915 Wyckoff Ave., Ridgewood, Queens (No phone)—The local anarcho-noise grinders **Child Abuse** are known for cheap Casio keyboards, layers of pulverizing sound, indecipherable screeched vocals, and unrelenting drum blasts. They play this dilapidated, bilevel performance space and low-rent residence (the main stage is actually in the kitchen) on Aug. 7. Leave the kids at home.

UNION HALL
702 Union St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-638-4400)—Aug. 10: **Forest Fire,** celebrating the release of its latest album, "Survival," uses a kitchen-sink approach to craft infectious lo-fi folk. "Survival" features collaborations with many stalwarts of the Brooklyn folk scene, including the local crooner Sharon Van Etten. **Shilpa Ray,** who seems to have indestructible vocal cords, plows through raucous garage and blues to warm up the crowd.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 5-8: A going concern for nearly two decades, **Trio 3** brings together the saxophonist **Oliver Lake,** the bassist **Reggie Workman,** and the drummer **Andrew Cyrille,** seasoned players who traverse the border between avant-garde and mainstream jazz. The equally adaptable pianist **Geri Allen** joins them as a guest soloist. Aug. 12-15: The lauded Brazilian vocalist **Leny Andrade** returns.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Aug. 4-9: The popular smooth-jazz guitarist **Larry Carlton** hasn't lost his edge. (Back in 1976, he provided the bruising solo on Steely Dan's "Kid Charlemagne.") Aug. 11-15: The jovial, rough-voiced singer **Steve Tyrell.** Aug. 16: **Gil Scott-Heron,** the righteous voice behind such socially aware anthems as "The Bottle" and "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," developed a blend of unflinching lyrics and jazzy, soulful vocals that made him a touchstone for R. & B. and politically conscious hip-hop artists. Aug. 17: Deep-rooted folk music is the province of **Tim Eriksen,** who sings and plays a variety of stringed instruments.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Aug. 4-9: **Cedar Walton,** a hard-bop pianist and composer whose dependability never masks his flair, adds the saxophonist Vincent Herring to his quartet.

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Aug. 5 and Aug. 12: One of the great songwriters to emerge during the rock era, **Jimmy Webb** is also a persuasive interpreter of his own work, including songs like "Wichita Lineman" and "Didn't We." Aug. 7-8: The vocalist **Allan Harris.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Aug. 6-9: **Freda Payne,** best known for the 1970 Motown hit "Band of Gold," has become a sure-footed singer of standards. Here she honors Ella Fitzgerald. Aug. 12-16: **Eliane Elias's** 2008 album, "Something for You," paid heartfelt tribute to her fellow-pianist Bill Evans. Drawing on that project, Elias is joined by the drummer **Adam Nussbaum** and by her husband, **Marc Johnson,** the last bassist to work with Evans.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 6-9: The veteran vocalist **Ernestine Anderson** receives hand-in-glove support from the saxophonist **Houston Person,** who honed his rapport with singers during a longtime collaboration with the late Etta Jones. Aug. 11-12: **Sean Jones,** a still evolving trumpeter with a welcoming tone and a burgeoning reputation. Aug. 13-16: The pianist **Steve Kuhn** has long-standing ties to both the bassist **Steve Swallow** and the drummer **Al Foster;** their shared histories should generate sparks when they team up here. Aug. 18-19: **Ali Jackson,** the go-to drummer for the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and Wynton Marsalis's recent ensembles, leads his own quintet.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Aug. 3-9: The saxophonist **Greg Osby,** one of jazz's foremost talent scouts, leads a sextet featuring two fresh voices: the Portuguese singer **Sara Serpa** and the guitarist **Nir Felder.** Aug. 11-16: The **J. D. Allen** trio. The inventive saxophonist recorded his last two albums, including the recently released "Shine!," in a stripped-to-the-bone setting. His engagement here will be similar, as he improvises with his regular bandmates, the bassist **Gregg August** and the drummer **Rudy Royston.**

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul."** Through Sept. 20. ♦ **"Francis Bacon: A Centenary Retrospective."** Through Aug. 16. ♦ **"Michelangelo's First Painting."** Through Sept. 7. ♦ **"Roxy Paine on the Roof: Maelstrom."** Through Oct. 25. ♦ **"Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages."** Through Aug. 23. ♦ **"Napoleon III and Paris."** Through Sept. 7. ♦ **"Augustus Saint-Gaudens in the Metropolitan Museum of Art."** Through Oct. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"In & Out of Amsterdam: Travels in Conceptual Art, 1960-1976."** Through Oct. 5. ♦ **"James Ensor."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Projects 90: Song Dong."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Looking at Music: Side 2."** Through Nov. 30. ♦ **"Performance 4: Roman Ondák."** Through Sept. 14. ♦ **"Ron Arad: No Discipline."** Through Oct. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Frank Lloyd Wright: From Within Outward."** Through Aug. 23. (Open Fridays, and Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Saturdays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"Dan Graham: Beyond."** Through Oct. 11. ♦ **"Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen: The Music Room."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Claes Oldenburg: Early Sculpture, Drawings, and Happenings Films."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Sadie Benning: Play Pause."** Through Sept. 20. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Yinka Shonibare MBE."** Through Sept. 20. ♦ **"Patricia Cronin: Harriet Hosmer, Lost and Found."** Through Jan. 24. ♦ **"Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Reflections in the Electric Mirror: New Feminist Video."** Through Jan. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Extreme Mammals: The Biggest, Smallest, and Most Amazing Mammals of All Time."** Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"Climate Change: The Threat to Life and a New Energy Future."** Through Aug. 16. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM
556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—**"Iran Inside Out."** Through Sept. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

THE CLOISTERS
Fort Tryon Park (212-923-3700)—**"Medieval Art, Architecture, and Cloistered Gardens."** Three of the cloisters reconstructed at this jewel-box outpost of the Metropolitan Museum are graced by gardens, which were planted based on information found in medieval poetry and garden documents, and medieval works of art, including tapestries, stained-glass windows, and column capitals. Approximately five thousand works of art from medieval Europe, with an emphasis on the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, are on view. Ongoing. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Portraits, Pastels, Prints: Whistler in the Frick Collection."** Through Aug. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Avedon Fashion 1944-2000."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"David Seidner: Paris Fashions, 1945."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"John Wood: Quiet Protest."** Through Sept. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Creating the Modern Stage: Designs for Theatre and Opera."** Through Aug. 16. ♦ **"Pages of Gold: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan."** Through Sept. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Intersections Intersected: The Photography of David Goldblatt."** Through Oct. 11. ♦ **"Rigo 23: The Deeper They Bury Me, the Louder My Voice Becomes."** Through Oct. 21. ♦ **"Dorothy Iannone: Lioness."** Through Oct. 18. ♦ **"Emory Douglas: Black Panther."** Through Oct. 18. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (718-592-9700)—**"Tarjama / Translation."** Through Sept. 27. ♦ **"Johanna Unzueta: Iron Folklore."** Through Sept. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Hurvin Anderson."** Through Oct. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

"HOT FUN IN THE SUMMERTIME"
With all the damp and unseasonable weather this summer, these photographs of sun, sand, and surf are reminders of what we've been missing, as well as what we've endured. (One of the most evocative images is Peter C. Jones's view of the ocean through a rain-clotted screen.) A classic LeRoy Grannis shot of five surfers riding a breaking wave sets an ecstatic mood, which is immediately grounded by Joni Sternbach's semi-formal tintype portraits of surfers posing next to their boards. Still-life studies of shells, starfish, blueberries, and flowers by Andreas Feininger, Jed Devine, and Regina DeLuise add atmospheric punctuation, as do Harri Kallio's alarmingly large-scale closeups of moths and other late-night party crashers. In the side gallery are great photographs of fixtures on the New York music scene, from Billie Holiday to the New York Dolls. Through Sept. 5. (Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

LILLIAN BIRNBAUM
Birnbaum is not the only contemporary photographer whose focus is adolescence, and her pictures of young girls occasionally recall other, stronger and more provocative work. Birnbaum, who photographed a group of seven friends between 2001 and 2007, is careful, respectful, and observant, and the best of her work is engaging, even touching. She empathizes with her subjects and is particularly sensitive to that transitional time when girls become intensely self-aware and suddenly more mature. Birnbaum's attempts to capture this new sense of gravity and self-consciousness are rewarded here and there, but many of her pictures pull back and go soft. She catches some lovely moments, but lets others slip away. Through Aug. 14. (Meislin, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-2552.)

GUYTON \ WALKER
This show by the collaborative team of Wade Guyton and Kelley Walker, two young New York artists with booming independent careers, has taken some heat for its art-about-art approach. But the vibrant, go-for-broke installation is really art about interconnection (or, as a French theorist would put it, "relational aesthetics"). References circulate like guests at a midsummer cocktail party, as nods to social scenes (Warhol's peeled banana, an icon of the Velvet Underground demimonde) mingle with social objects (tables, tumblers, a mod chandelier). It's all as American as red, white, and blue—the colors greet viewers in warped stripes, printed on drywall, when they step out of the elevator. Or is it "as French as"? A related show by the whip-smart duo just closed at a gallery in Paris. Through Aug. 7. (Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

DOROTHY IANNONE
Years before the term "sex-positive feminist" crossed anyone's lips, the American artist, who lives in Berlin (and is the subject of a related show at the New Museum), was expressing her erotic delight in highly stylized paintings that chronicled her love affair with the Swiss-German artist Dieter Roth. The best works in this four-decade survey are the earliest: four canvases and one painted sound-piece-in-a-box made between 1970 and 1982. Status-quo power goes haywire, as the muse (Iannone) assumes the role of a mystical master. Language weaves through the imagery, as much an ornamental device as a conveyor of meaning. Words reach their climax amid the vivid blues, violets, and bright-yellow starbursts of "Irresistible Strangers," when a background of "yes"es (shades of Joyce's Molly Bloom) dissolves into "eyes." Through Aug. 7. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

"GLITZ & GRIME: PHOTOGRAPHS OF TIMES SQUARE"
Yet another broad take on New York City, this one zeroing in on a crossroads that photographers helped make famous. The five pictures on the opening wall range from 1947 to 1997, from Rudy Burckhardt to Philip-Lorca diCorcia, and are as choreographed as a modern dance, with silhouetted figures converging and separating. Olivo Barbieri's aerial view and Andrew Moore's shot of a sign-encrusted corner of Forty-second Street, both in super-saturated color, capture the site's current unreality. But William Klein, Ted Croner, Paul Himmel, and Robert Frank pin down the eternal Times Square, the latter with a picture of a street preacher's chair with a placard reading, "Coming Soon! Death, Judgment, Eternity." Through Aug. 28. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

"SEXY AND THE CITY"
Andrew Bush's terrific photographs of drivers in their cars still occupy the gallery's main space, but

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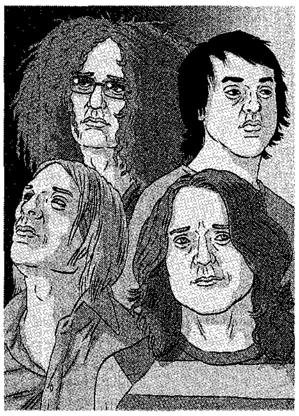
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
EJSTES ROCKETS

Sweden's Gustav Ejstes and his psychedelic-rock band, Dungen, almost beg to be described as hippies. Ejstes even sports the Jesus look. But the stereotype of the hippie adduces a fair amount of naïveté and aimlessness, and these



MICHAEL WELDON

qualities are entirely absent. The Dungen concert I saw last year was one of the most pleasurable rock shows in recent memory. Ejstes can play most of the instruments on his records, and sometimes does, but he has chosen his live team well. The drummer Johan Holmegard tunes his set with a wide range of pitches, and the guitarist Reine Fiske and the bassist Mattias Gustavsson play with a fluidity that seems like no big deal at first, and then like an awfully big deal. To properly describe Dungen, which plays the Bell House on Aug. 14, might be simply to string together synonyms for "fluid." Ejstes's songs are indebted to classic rock but are tethered to melody and propelled by variation. The bits of hippiedom made good on here are sensuality and hedonism, minus the troublesome side effects.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

in the back there's a new show that looks at New York as a city in heat. Most of the pictures are clustered together on one wall, salon style, so romantic images (kissing couples as seen by Weegee, Arthur Leipzig, and Charles Harbutt) get an extra charge from their more explicitly erotic neighbors. André Kertész's rooftop sunbather, Merry Alpern's furtive hooker, and the naked men whom Alvin Baltrop found on the Christopher Street pier were unaware of the camera. But other subjects strike a knowing pose, as in the teen-age couple that Diane Arbus photographed on a park bench, the boy's leg slung over the girl's, her hand cupping his neck. Through Aug. 28. (Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370.)

"YOUR GOLD TEETH II"
Don't be thrown by the title of this extraordinary show, which reads like a reference to hip-hop dentistry but is actually lifted from Steely Dan. The curator Todd Levin has a connoisseur's eye and a risk-taker's temperament—when was the last time you considered a Cornell box or a Basquiat drawing in the light of glass objects by Toots Zynsky or Marvin Lipofsky? (One of the show's many subthemes—there are forty-four artists—is Pilchuk's revenge.) Borders—between art and craft, fine and folk, famed and unknown—are demolished. Levin disrupts expectations, but he also discloses affinities. Some are expected (Roe Ethridge owes Paul Outerbridge, Rashawn Griffin owes David Hammons), but others are bolts from the blue. A separate show by the botanical alchemist Paula Hayes, in an adjacent room and on the gallery's terrace, grounds all the culture in nature. Through Aug. 15. (Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889.)

Short List

KEREN CYTTER / LUKE FOWLER / TRIS VONNA-MICHELL: X Initiative, 548 W. 22nd St. 917-697-4886. Through Sept. 19. **SCOTT REEDER:** Reich, 537A W. 23rd St. 212-924-4949. Through Aug. 29. **"BLOOD DRIVE":** Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700. Through Sept. 4. **"WHITE NOISE":** James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500. Through Aug. 12.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

"BLACK ACID CO-OP"
Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe's labyrinthine installation is an exercise in mind-bending verisimilitude—an alternate reality that's so hyperreal you may feel like you're dreaming. Even viewers who didn't make it to Marfa, Texas, where the project débuted as "Hello Meth Lab in the Sun," in 2008, or to Miami, where it was reincarnated in December, are likely to be struck by déjà vu. Among the spirits haunting the house are the all-encompassing environments of Gregor Schneider, Christoph Büchel, and Mike Nelson. But those affinities in no way diminish Freeman and Lowe's dazzling achievement, from the Chinese herb emporium in the basement to the Sudafed-strewn meth lab to the red-carpeted art gallery that's entered through a hole in the wall. Curiouser and curiouser . . . and curiouser. Through Aug. 15. (Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster St. 212-343-7300.)

Short List

"THE ANKLE BONE IS HIGHER ON THE INSIDE": Museum 52, 4 E. 2nd St. 347-789-7072. Through Aug. 7. **"CHARACTER GENERATOR":** Eleven Rivington, 11 Rivington St. 212-982-1930. Through Aug. 14. **"HUMAN ARRANGEMENT":** Uffner, 47 Orchard St. 212-274-0064. Through Aug. 8. **"MIRROR ME":** Dispatch, 127 Henry St. 212-227-2783. Through Aug. 23.

DANCE

GABRIELLE LANSNER & COMPANY
In "Turning Heads, Frocks in Flight," the final installment of L.M.C.C.'s "Sitelines," a deliberately diverse group of women in whimsical dresses tell stories of self-empowerment. (South Cove Plaza, Battery Park City. 212-219-9401. Aug. 4, Aug. 6, Aug. 10-11, and Aug. 13 at 12:30 and Aug. 5 and Aug. 12 at 6:30.)

PILOBOLUS
The illusionist-acrobat-dancers conclude their annual Joyce season. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Aug. 4-5 at 7:30, Aug. 6-7 at 8, and Aug. 8 at 2 and 8.)

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS
Aug. 5-9: Kicking off the annual festival, the newly formed Asphalt Orchestra—a twist on the marching band, conceived by members of Bang on a Can—will play free sets at various locations around Lincoln Center. The twelve-member group, which includes musicians from Cyro Baptista's percussion ensemble and the Electronic Music Foundation, will play new works by Goran Bregovic and Stew with Heidi Rodewald, among others, while performing choreographed movements by the imaginative downtown dancemaker Susan Marshall. ♦ Aug. 8: For "Hip Hop Generation Next" (co-presented by Dancing in the Streets), New York's Full Circle, led by the eminent Rokafella and Kwikstep, joins crews from Philadelphia, Chicago, and Seoul, plus rappers from Sierra Leone, for an international, state-of-the-art B-boy summit. ♦ Aug. 9: Salsa is the common base for a bicoastal double bill. From Los Angeles, Ana Maria Alvarez's Contra-Tiempo draws from the African diaspora with an activist bent and a sense of humor; Frankie Martinez's Abakuá Afro-Latin Dance Company conjures the Caribbean in "Island Fever" and struts its Nuyorican stuff in "After Hour Funk." ♦ Aug. 15: The postmodernist Mark Dendy, absent from local stages for almost a decade, returns, applying M. C. Escher-style mind-bending methods to choreography; the inventive, ballet-based Ben Munisteri brings a première set to Radiohead along with his celebrated Stravinsky piece "Tuesday, 4 a.m." (For a complete schedule, visit www.lincolncenter.org.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Aug. 7 at 8: The venerable African-American institution Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, still vital after more than forty years, brings a program that includes "In My Father's House," by Debbie Blunden-Diggs (the company's artistic director), blending lay liturgical dance and the professional style of Alvin Ailey's "Revelations." The hypervisceral theatre of nathantrice/RITUALS marks "Strange Love," a courtship dance shaded with film-noir murkiness. ♦ Aug. 14-15 at 8: Christopher Wheeldon's ballet troupe Morphoses performs dances set to the raw-edged music of the folk-rock singer and songwriter Martha Wainwright, including a series of small pieces by Wheeldon and the company member Edwaard Liang. Wainwright's exposed emotionality should suit Wheeldon's style perfectly. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 69th St. 212-360-2777.)

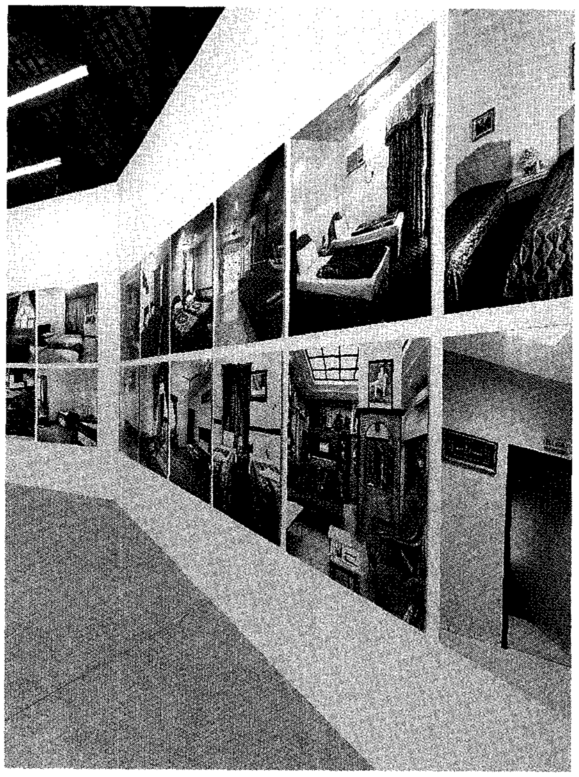
TULSA BALLET
For regional ballet companies, a season at the Joyce is a rite of passage and a recognition of success. Tulsa Ballet last visited New York twenty-five years ago; since then it has changed leadership and retooled its repertoire, to reflect an interest in contemporary dance and Europe. The company performs Kenneth MacMillan's "Elite Syncopations," from 1974, a playful little dance-hall number set to Scott Joplin rags; "Por Vos Muero" (1996), by the theatrical Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato; and "This Is Your Life," a series of tango-inspired vignettes by the relatively unknown Korean-American choreographer Young Soon Hue. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Aug. 10-12 at 7:30, Aug. 13-14 at 8, and Aug. 15 at 2 and 8.)

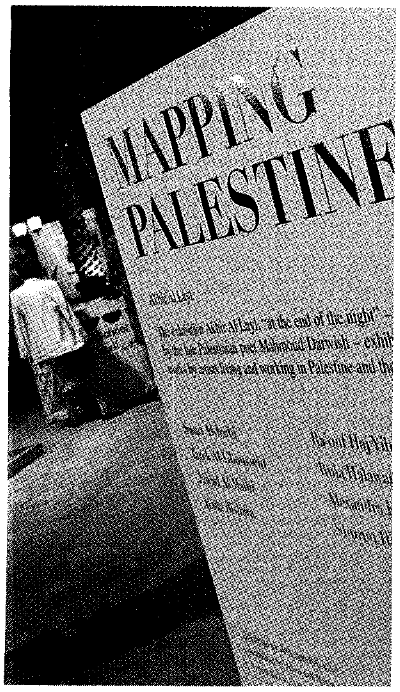
NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
Dance plays such a small part in this mammoth festival that the options are manageable. For "Face the Music ... and Dance!," five accomplished choreographers (Tina Croll, Heidi Latsky, Maura Donohue, Julian Barnett, and Noa Sagie) band together for a combined program on the theme "Strength is in unity." In "A Time to Dance," the life and career of the Austrian dancer and dance therapist Elizabeth Polk are re-created by her grandniece, Libby Skala. And, in "Ectospasms,"

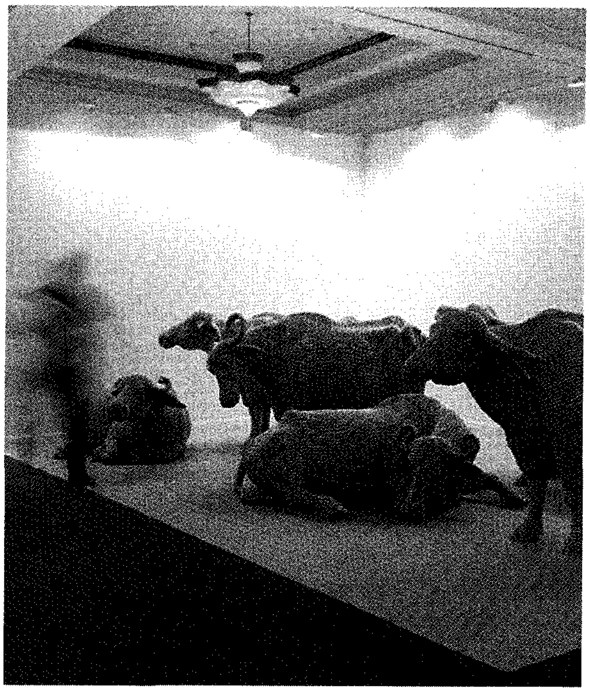
Art Scene Flourishes in the Gulf

Imagining and creating are two passions that have fueled Dubai's growth, so it's no surprise that this vital metropolis has also proved fertile ground for the arts. Galleries, auction houses, and fairs have set up shop here in recent years, establishing Dubai as a hub for art and culture in the Gulf.

"The past few years has been an extraordinary time culturally in Dubai," says John Martin, director for **Art Dubai**, which in just three years has emerged as arguably the preëminent art fair in the Middle East, held annually in March. He attributes the fair's success to Dubai's entrepreneurial spirit, openness to new ventures, and location as a regional crossroads. "For artists, Dubai is an ideal city," says Martin. "It has old cultural traditions and yet it's an incredibly outward-looking, dynamic city." That combination has made it a particularly welcoming place for artists from all over the







Middle East, who can live and work near home yet have the freedom to explore beyond those borders.

"Up until now, many artists have looked back at wherever they've come from—India, the Middle East, Persia, Iran," explains Martin. "Now, they're keeping one eye on that but they're also looking forward. I think for many people Dubai has become kind of a neutral home, where they can experiment and have fun." He says there is a similar openness and sense of adventure among Dubai's residents, who have demonstrated a hunger for learning about contemporary art.

"I've found that collectors in Dubai are prepared to take a chance, in the same way that many developers build buildings with amazing architecture," he says. "They want something that is stimulating and different."

For the first time ever, the United Arab Emirates participated in the Venice Biennale this year, and one featured artist was the Dubai-based photographer Lamya Gargash. For the Biennale, Gargash photographed one-star hotels around the U.A.E. in a series that addressed the country's long-standing tradition of hospitality as well as the fast pace of change in the region. Her work is represented by **The Third Line** gallery, which opened in 2005 in Dubai's Al Quoz neighborhood, an industrial area where many new galleries have gravitated. Two others are **B21**, dedicated to showcasing emerging Middle Eastern artists, and **Ayyam Gallery**, specializing in Syrian and Arabic art.

"Each gallery is completely different from the others," says Claudia Cellini, who co-founded The Third Line with partners Sunny Rahbar and Omar Ghobash, adding that the work they show defies generalizations. "It's something very new; it hasn't even been defined yet. Does it deserve its own classification? Is it influenced by Islamic art? Is it a complete departure from Western contemporary art? There are a lot of really exciting conversations that need to be had."

Local galleries and event organizers are actively engaging in that conversation, putting together lectures, workshops, and other public programs to help educate visitors about emerging artists as well as the broader spectrum of Arabic culture.

Besides offering exhibitions, The Third Line hosts a monthly bilingual Arab-literature appreciation circle, film screenings, and an international multimedia discussion. Art Dubai emphasizes educational programs as an integral part of the fair through its **Global Art Forum**, a series of talks featuring leading curators and other leaders in the contemporary art world addressing topics such as the subject of one of last year's panels, "Is Collecting a Statement or a Cause?"

The **Dubai Culture and Arts Authority**, a new governmental agency, has also been instrumental in fostering the arts in Dubai, spearheading the U.A.E.'s participation in the Venice Biennale as well as nurturing the development of local events such as the **Bastakiya Art Fair**, held as a satellite to Art Dubai.

The Bastakiya neighborhood is the city's heritage area, a locus of traditional architecture near Dubai Creek that is also home to the **XVA Gallery**. Founded in 2003, XVA is one of the older contemporary art galleries in the city, combining exhibition space with a boutique hotel, a café (famous for its mint lemonade), and two *majlis*-style courtyards that serve as a locus for cultural events and discussions.

"Mona Hauser, who started XVA, envisioned an Arabic style forum—a meeting place for people to gather," says Rosie Hayes, the director of the gallery. "There's a huge outside courtyard, and that's where people go to talk about art." An upcoming exhibition at XVA features work by an American artist, Nelda Gilliam, one of several expatriates living in Dubai whom the gallery represents. Opening September 26th, the show, titled "Unspoken Marks, Unspoken Words," pairs abstract canvases with collages representing thoughts and emotions.

While Hayes says there is a wide diversity in the work the gallery exhibits, artists in the region do seem to be grappling with subjects that reflect an era of unprecedented change and development. "A lot of our artists have lived in quite interesting political circumstances," she says. "And that is an important theme in a lot of contemporary Islamic art."

For more information, a map and guide providing current arts and cultural listings in Dubai is downloadable online at artinthecity.com.

Visit www.definitelydubai.com for more information.

COVER IMAGES, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: "MAKE IT BELIEVE," NEW WORKS BY AMIR H. FALLAH COURTESY OF THE THIRD LINE; BASTAKIYA COURTYARD PHOTO COURTESY OF XVA GALLERY; "UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD," WORKS BY SHEZAD DAWOOD COURTESY OF THE THIRD LINE; LAMYA GARGASH INSTALLATION AT THE VENICE BIENNALE ©MOHAMED SOMJI FOR UAE PAVILION. *THIS PAGE L. TO R.:* VALAY SHINDE, SAKSHI GALLERY, ART DUBAI 2009; PALESTINIAN PAVILION, "MAPPING PALESTINE," COURTESY OF ART DUBAI 2009

Lola Lola Dance Theatre travels back to 1858 and beyond, reënacting the moment when the Fox sisters contacted the dead. (Various locations. 866-468-7619. For a complete schedule, visit www.fringenyc.org. Aug. 16-30.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
Early on, the dances of the hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris (whose troupe, Puremovement, performs at the Ted Shawn, Aug. 5-9) drew upon his experience as a young black man growing up in Philadelphia. These displays of B-boy virtuosity, shadowed by violence, still thrill and haunt in "March of the Antmen" (1992) and "Students of the Asphalt Jungle" (1995). With the incorporation of female dancers, though, Harris's themes broadened, and his latest work, "Something to Do with Love," tackles the relationship between men, women, and God in a rich alternation of arrested and flowing motion. ♦ Jacinta Vlach's Liberation Dance Theatre (at the Doris Duke, Aug. 5-9) comes from San Francisco with a fiery Afro-Latin emphasis, turning a critical eye inward in "Abjection in America" and onto corruptions of power in a riff on George Orwell's "Animal Farm." ♦ The New York-based modern-dance company Doug Varone and Dancers is known for its luscious, full-throttle movement style; at the Ted Shawn, Aug. 12-16, they perform "Lux" (2006), which surges and flows with energy, framed by a muse-like figure—Varone himself—and driven by its score, Philip Glass's "Light." "Castles" (2004) is set to Prokofiev's "Waltz Suite." ♦ Montreal's Rubberbandance (at the Doris Duke, Aug. 12-16), directed by Victor Quijada, has developed a nouveau-street style that merges classicism with breaking, hip-hop, and martial-arts-inspired kicks and lunges. Quijada's newest work, "Punto Ciego (Blind Spot)," is a kind of collage, employing bits of narrative taken from various sources (including Kundera and Tarantino), and cast from diverse points of view. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Through Aug. 30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

CONCERTS IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
The surprisingly eclectic annual festival hits its stride. Aug. 7-8 at 8: Louis Langrée conducts the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in weighty works by Brahms (including the Fourth Symphony) as well as in Haydn's lithe Piano Concerto in D Major (with Stefan Vladar). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 8 at 10:30: Following the second concert, Vladar extends his Mostly Mozart début run with one of the festival's "A Little Night Music" recitals, offering sonatas by Haydn and Beethoven (No. 32 in C Minor). (Kaplan Penthouse.) ♦ Aug. 9 at 5: In its high style and euphonious sound, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe outclasses its Continental competitors. In the first of two concerts with the pianist and conductor Pierre-Laurent Aimard, the group essays Haydn's Symphony No. 101 (the "Clock"), along with Ligeti's Chamber Concerto and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 19 in F Major. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Aug. 11-12 at 8: Langrée and the festival orchestra return with the magnetic Joshua Bell, offering Haydn's "London" Symphony (No. 104), Mozart's Adagio and Rondo for Violin and Orchestra, and Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 13-14 at 7:30 and Aug. 16 at 5: John Adams conducts the New York-première performances of **"A Flowering Tree,"** his most recent collaboration with Peter Sellars and one of the most lush and beautiful of his works. The opera, a cross between a South Indian folktale and "The Magic Flute," features such exceptional young singers as Eric Owens and Jessica Rivera, as well as the distinctive choral singing of the Schola Cantorum of Caracas and sets by George Tsypin. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St.) ♦ Aug. 17 at 7:30: Adams returns to lead the dynamic International Contemporary Ensemble in three more of his works: "Son of Chamber Symphony," the clarinet concerto "Gnarly Buttons" (with Michael Collins), and one of his first masterworks, the enthralling "Shaker Loops." (Alice Tully Hall.) (212-721-6500. For full schedule, see www.mostlymozart.org.)

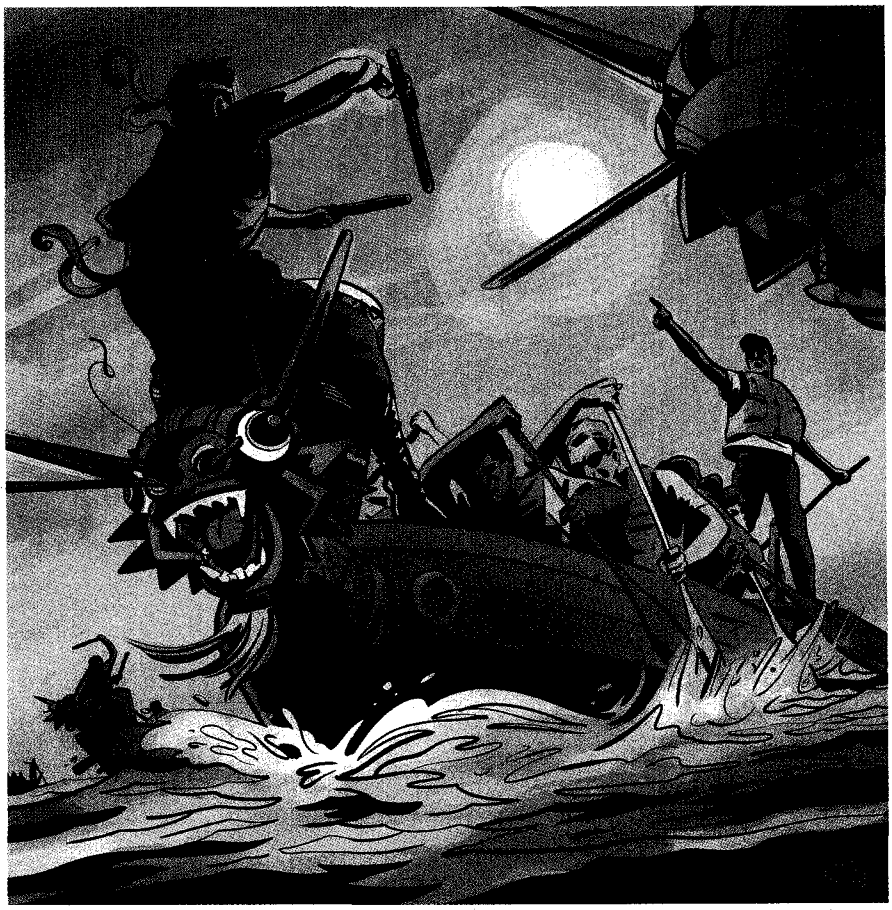
BARGEMUSIC
Aug. 8 at 8 and Aug. 9 at 3: In the largest of several mid-August events at the floating chamber-music series, the Manhattan Symphonee offers a little-orchestra concert (with the violinist Mark Peskanov and the pianist Olga Vinokur) that features music by Mozart (including the Symphony No. 29 in A Major), Beethoven (the Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-Flat Major), and Sarasate. ♦ Aug. 12 and Aug. 14 at 8: Vinokur returns to perform works by Medtner, Scriabin, Prokofiev (the Sonata No. 3 in A Minor), and Rachmaninoff (Six Moments Musicaux, Op. 16). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

OUT OF TOWN

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
This festival, which has always balanced an elegant conservatism with a taste for new music, is getting a bit more daring this year. Aug. 6 at 6:30: A concert with the stylish young avant-garders of the cello-piano-percussion trio Real Quiet, which offers music by Chinary Ung, Evan Ziporyn, Brett Dean, and the Dutch provocateur known as Jacob TV ("Pimpin"). ♦ Aug. 9 at 6:30: A crew that features such musicians as the flutist Marya Martin and the pianist Jeremy Denk offers a melodious evening of music by Mozart (the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major) and Mendelssohn (the Piano Trio in C Minor), with a little Eric Ewazen thrown in. ♦ Aug. 11 at 6:30: The dashing young gentlemen of the string quartet Brooklyn Rider perform an eclectic program that features music by Komitas, Philip Glass (the Quartet No. 2, "Company"), Schubert, and the Brooklyn Russian-American maestro Ljova. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. 631-537-6368. For full schedule, see www.bcmf.org.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
Aug. 6 and Aug. 14 at 8, Aug. 8 at 1:30, Aug. 11 at 2, and Aug. 16 at 3: The redoubtable Jonathan Miller directs **"La Traviata,"** with a cast featuring Mary Dunleavy, Ryan MacPherson, and Malcolm MacKenzie; Mikhail Agrest conducts. ♦ Aug. 7 and Aug. 15 at 8, Aug. 9 at 3, and Aug. 18 at 2: Gian Carlo Menotti's **"The Consul,"** with Melissa Citro, Michael Chioldi, Joyce Castle, and Leah Wool in the leading roles; David Angus. ♦ Aug. 8 and Aug. 13 at 8, Aug. 10 and Aug. 17 at 2, and Aug. 15 at 1:30: Rossini's **"La Cenerentola,"** with Julie Boulianne, John Tessier, Eduardo Chama, and Keith Phares heading the cast; Joseph Colaneri. ♦ Aug. 9 and Aug. 16 at 11:30 A.M.: Miller supervises a "dramatized" concert version of Purcell's **"Dido and Aeneas"** for several performances this month, featuring David Adam Moore and the young Met star Tamara Mumford in the leading roles; Michael Beattie. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

TANGLEWOOD
Aug. 7 at 2:30: In the first of this year's concerts in the 2009 Festival of Contemporary Music (through Aug. 11), fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center perform works by such composers as Christopher Rouse, Matthias Pintscher, and David Lang (the searing "Illumination Rounds"). ♦ Aug. 8 at 8:30: Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, an effective, if unsubtle, master of Romantic and early-modern repertory, conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Prokofiev's "Classical" Symphony and Orff's "Carmina Burana" (featuring the vocal soloists Laura Claycomb, Lawrence Brownlee, and Markus Werba, with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus). ♦ Aug. 9 at 2:30: Yo-Yo Ma is the special guest in a concert with the B.S.O. (conducted by Julian Kuerti) that features music by George Perle, Shostakovich (the Cello Concerto No. 1), Fauré, and Bizet (the Symphony in C Major). ♦ Aug. 15 at 8:30: André



The Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival, in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

KYLE T. WEBSTER

Previn conducts his longtime B.S.O. colleagues in Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, Liszt's dreamy Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Jean-Yves Thibaudet), and Ravel's "La Valse." ♦ Aug. 16 at 2:30: The dignified Kurt Masur leads his charges in the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in an all-Brahms program—the Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-Flat Major (with Garrick Ohlsson) and the Second Symphony. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200. For full schedule, see www.bso.org.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

Aug. 8 at 6: In a program entitled "Wild Nights," the violinist Maria Bachmann joins the pianist Andrew Armstrong and the cellist Wendy Sutter in performing music by Kodály, Bartók, Brahms, and Philip Glass (the new Sonata for Violin and Piano). ♦ Aug. 9 at 4: Katinka Kleijn, a dynamic cellist in both the Chicago Symphony and the International Contemporary Ensemble, has Woodstock's "music chapel" to herself, performing unaccompanied works by Bach and Kodály (the Sonata for Solo Cello). ♦ Aug. 15 at 6: George Tsontakis, a Hudson Valley resident and a Grawemeyer Award-winning composer of radiant, energetic music, receives performances of two of his works by the vibrant Antares Ensemble, which closes the concert with Messiaen's magnificent "Quartet for the End of Time." (Woodstock, N.Y. For ticket information and full schedule, see www.maverickconcerts.org.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

In the capstone event of the Yale School of Music's summer season, the soprano Dawn Upshaw and the pianist Gilbert Kalish bring a bit of Tanglewood glamour to Norfolk's Music Shed, performing music by Debussy, Ravel, and Ives. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000. Aug. 8 at 8. For full schedule, see www.norfolkmusic.org.)

MARLBORO MUSIC

The summer winds down at the iconic chamber-music festival, headed by the pianists Mitsuko Uchida and Richard Goode; concert programs are announced one week in advance at www.marlboromusic.org. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. Aug. 8 and Aug. 14-15 at 8:30 and Aug. 9 and Aug. 16 at 2:30.)

BARD SUMMERSCAPE: "ST. PAUL"

In a preamble to this year's Bard Music Festival, "Wagner and His World," Leon Botstein conducts the noble oratorio by Mendelssohn, who, like Meyerbeer, influenced Wagner despite the younger composer's anti-Semitism. With the American Symphony Orchestra and the Bard Festival Chorale. (Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. Aug. 9 at 3.)

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL

The music of Richard Wagner, overwhelmingly in the operatic form, is not exactly unknown in New York, and mounting the "Ring of the Nibelung" is beyond Leon Botstein's financial and professional reach. But in this, the first installment in a two-weekend festival, he will provide context and background by programming a plethora of shorter works by the German colossus and his contemporaries. Aug. 14 at 8: The very young Wagner's Symphony in C Major (1832) leads off a program with Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra (with the soprano Christine Goerke and the bass-baritone Daniel Mobbs) that moves chronologically, offering the "Rienzi" Overture and excerpts from the operas "Die Feen," "Das Liebesverbot," "Tristan und Isolde," and "Parsifal." ♦ Aug. 16 at 5:30: "Wagner in Paris," an abundant chamber concert offered by such musicians as the pianist Jeremy Denk and the Borromeo String Quartet, features vocal and instrumental works by Wagner ("Aideux de Marie Stuart"), Auber, Cherubini (the String Quartet No. 4), Meyerbeer, Chopin, and Liszt ("Réminiscences des Huguenots"), among others. (Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. For full schedule of concerts and talks, see www.fishercenter.bard.edu.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

Members of the St. Petersburg String Quartet (with friends) bring their effusive, melody-driven style to a mixed program of works by Schubert (the "Quartettsatz"), Turina, Mozart, and Dvořák (the String Quintet in E-Flat Major). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. Aug. 9 at 3. For full schedule, see www.musicmountain.org.)

COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

One of the most convivial concerts of the summer is Cooperstown's "Beer and Beethoven," an event that features not only the refined playing of the Daedalus Quartet (presenting music by Bartók and Ginastera as well) but also a sampling of Belgian-style beers from the nearby Brewery Ommegang. (Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y. 877-666-7421. Aug. 9 at 7:30.)

TABLES FOR TWO
DBGB

HONORE BROWN

299 Bowery, between Houston and E. 1st Sts. (212-933-5300)—Conceived as a paean to all things Bowery, DBGB might be regarded as Daniel Boulud's first adventure in slumming. The name, for starters, offers a clumsy tip of the hat to CBGB, the legendary punk club, which used to be nearby. Inside, the décor strives to evoke the street's ubiquitous restaurant-supply stores. As for the cuisine, it's self-consciously down-market, and in place of an extensive wine list there's lots and lots of beer. But Boulud is the uptown chef who introduced New York to the twenty-seven-dollar hamburger, and he doesn't let anyone forget it. Beers have "notes of dandelion" or taste like "sea breeze and coriander." Mirrored walls are scrawled with pithy quotes by the likes of Shakespeare and Virginia Woolf. The open shelves around the dining room, stacked with surplus tableware, suggest Williams-Sonoma, and the clientele is more trading pit than mosh pit. "Daniel, he likes the rock 'n' roll," Boulud's music programmer insisted to the *Times*. Nevertheless, dining at DBGB can feel a bit like seeing your dad don a motorcycle jacket.

Boulud might think that he needs the thematic gimmickry to justify the restaurant's relative affordability, but, in this day and age, affordability justifies itself. Happily, the best dishes on the eclectic menu tend to be the cheapest. Among the impressive variety of sausages, the *espagnole* is a standout—sweet peppers balance the chorizo kick—as is the *boudin basque*, a pleasantly creamy twist on the conventional style. The Yankee burger, on the other hand, with its shredded iceberg lettuce and sesame-seed bun, is a reminder that sometimes conventional is best. Matzo-ball soup, a surprising inclusion, is made with a "double stock"—ultra-concentrated chicken broth—and it's good enough to put Katz's Deli, just down Houston, on notice. The desserts, though, are mostly juvenile concoctions, served with a drizzle of irony. An "omelette Norvegienne" (a.k.a. Baked Alaska) could be mistaken for a slice of Carvel ice-cream cake, were it not for the halo of flames. After dinner one recent evening, a well-heeled patron emerged onto the sidewalk with a golf club propped jauntily on his shoulder, while a chauffeur-driven S.U.V. idled at the curb. If you scrub the grit from the Bowery, after all, it's just the East Side. (Open daily for dinner. Entrees $14-$26.)

—*Lila Byock*

MOVIES
OPENING

BANDSLAM

In this teen comedy, a young rock group tries to win a battle of the bands. Directed by Todd Graff; starring Vanessa Hudgens, Lisa Kudrow, and Alyson Michalka. Opening Aug. 14. (In wide release.)

BEESWAX

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Aug. 7. (Film Forum.)

BLISS

A drama, directed by Abdullah Oğuz, about an honor killing in Turkey. In Turkish. Opening Aug. 7. (Cinema Village.)

CLOUD 9

Andreas Dresen directed this drama, about an elderly woman who begins an adulterous affair with an even older man. In German. Opening Aug. 14. (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

COLD SOULS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 7. (In limited release.)

DISTRICT 9

A sci-fi film about aliens who have found refuge in South Africa. Directed by Neill Blomkamp; starring Sharlto Copley and David James. Opening Aug. 14. (In wide release.)

EARTH DAYS

Robert Stone directed this documentary, about the early days of the environmentalist movement. Opening Aug. 14. (Quad Cinema.)

G. I. JOE: RISE OF COBRA

A thriller, directed by Stephen Sommers, about a U.S. Army Special Ops unit. Starring Brendan Fraser, Channing Tatum, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Sienna Miller, and Dennis Quaid. Opening Aug. 7. (In wide release.)

THE GOODS: LIVE HARD, SELL HARD

Jeremy Piven and Will Ferrell star in this comedy, about aggressive used-car salesmen. Directed by Neal Brennan. Opening Aug. 14. (In wide release.)

I SELL THE DEAD

A horror film, set in the eighteenth century, about a grave robber. Directed by Glenn McQuaid; starring Dominic Monaghan, Larry Fessenden, and Ron Perlman. Opening Aug. 14. (IFC Center.)

I'M GONNA EXPLODE

Gerardo Naranjo directed this drama, set in Mexico, about a girl and a boy who run away from home. Opening Aug. 12. (Film Society of Lincoln Center.)

IT MIGHT GET LOUD

Davis Guggenheim directed this documentary, about the electric guitar and those who play it; featuring the Edge, Jimmy Page, and Jack White. Opening Aug. 14. (In limited release.)

JULIE & JULIA

A dual bio-pic, about Julia Child and Julie Powell, a Brooklyn woman who attempts to cook all of Child's recipes. Directed by Nora Ephron; starring Meryl Streep and Amy Adams. Opening Aug. 7. (In wide release.)

MY FÜHRER

Dani Levy directed this comedy, set during the Second World War, about a Jewish actor who is removed from a concentration camp to give Adolf Hitler acting lessons. In German. Opening Aug. 14. (Quad Cinema.)

PAPER HEART

A comedy about an actress who wants to make a documentary about love. Directed by Nicholas Jasenovec; starring Charlyne Yi and Michael Cera. Opening Aug. 7. (In limited release.)

A PERFECT GETAWAY

David Twohy directed this thriller, about a young couple whose Hawaiian honeymoon turns deadly. Starring Timothy Olyphant, Milla Jovovich, and Steve Zahn. Opening Aug. 7. (In wide release.)

PONYO
An animated adventure, directed by Hayao Miyazaki, loosely based on Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid." With the voices of Cate Blanchett, Matt Damon, Tina Fey, Frankie Jonas, Cloris Leachman, Liam Neeson, Lily Tomlin, and Betty White. Opening Aug. 14. (In wide release.)

THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE
Robert Schwentke directed this science-fiction romance, about a man who travels through time (Eric Bana) and the woman who loves him (Rachel McAdams). Opening Aug. 14. (In wide release.)

YASUKUNI
A documentary by the director Li Ying, about a Japanese shrine to soldiers and the nationalistic demonstrations it attracts. In Cantonese and Japanese. Opening Aug. 12. (Film Forum.)

NOW PLAYING

BEESWAX
Business really is at the center of this sweet-toned romantic drama by the director Andrew Bujalski, whose first feature, "Funny Ha Ha," is the founding film of the mumblecore movement. Most of those films focus on the economic lives of twenty-somethings; here, Bujalski invests the behind-the-scenes intrigue concerning a vintage-clothing boutique in Austin, Texas, with a range of deeply lived everyday passions, which lend the small-scale drama a novelistic richness. Jeannie (Tilly Hatcher), who runs the store, gets around in a wheelchair (and Bujalski films her ordinary challenges with unsentimental directness). She fears being sued by her estranged business partner (Anne Dodge), and, when she turns to her friend Merrill (Alex Karpovsky), who's in law school, for help, he offers his counsel and then some. Meanwhile, Jeannie's roommate and sister, Lauren (Maggie Hatcher, Tilly's real-life sister), faces crucial decisions that threaten to affect Jeannie's course of action. Bujalski's abiding fascination with and respect for work twists ironically around his characters' preference for its straightforward demands over the open-ended ambiguities of love. He brings together a tangy array of people whose place in the economy is sketched as clearly as their place in the chain of affections, and gets at the power relations that the most intimate connections depend on.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum.)

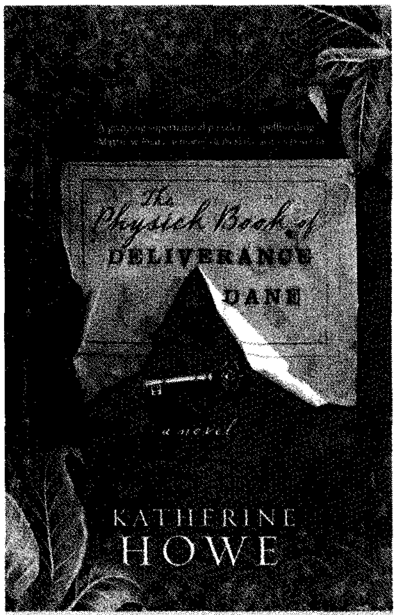
BRÜNO
A big skip backward for Sacha Baron Cohen, after the merry overkill of "Borat." This time, he plays Brüno, an Austrian fashion devotee, who, having lost a job in his native land, decides to plumb America—with brief layovers elsewhere—for fame, fortune, and Paula Abdul. The technique is little changed from the previous venture, and is starting to look weary: he makes fools out of gullible celebrities (mostly, it must be said, from the lower ranks), pausing only to make fools of regular folk. But where, we might ask, is the comic purpose when a white, British, college-educated comedian adopts a camp disguise, goes on a combustible daytime TV show, and toys with the more conservative prejudices of an audience largely composed of working-class black women? What exactly is being proved? There are laughs here, but some have the air of a knowing setup, and far too many are plucked from the crotch, as if directed toward an audience too young to see the film; where Borat's naughty innocence caught and trapped a wide variety of victims in its net, "Brüno" is basically a one-track joke. Defenders of the film, which is directed by Larry Charles, will claim that it exposes the homophobic depths of Western society; for every bigot, however, there is a kindlier soul who wants to be of assistance, and, as for the hectic depictions of gay life and lust, they lurch into perilous caricature. Where Baron Cohen takes his prodigious, unfazeable gifts next is anyone's guess.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/20/09.) (In wide release.)

DONOVAN'S REEF
To the west of the West is French Polynesia, where John Ford sets this rollicking and ribald clash of natural splendor and social imperatives. For twenty-two years, since before Pearl Harbor, the barkeep Guns Donovan (John Wayne) and the beachcomber Tom Gilhooley (Lee Marvin) have been celebrating their shared birthday with a knock-down, drag-out fight, and this year is no different—yet changes are afoot in paradise. Amelia Dedham (Elizabeth Allen), the Boston blue-blood daughter of the island's doctor (Jack Warden), whom she's never met, arrives in the hope of finding her father of "low moral character" and thus doing him out of his share in the family's shipping firm. Bittersweet side business involves the gold-digging French governor (Cesar Romero) who pursues Amelia, an aging showgirl (Dorothy Lamour) seeking matrimony, and the doctor's three children with a local princess, who get passed off as Donovan's. The island's breathtaking vistas move even the stolid Amelia to pantheistic rapture, but a monument to the fighters who helped deliver the island from wartime Japan—including Donovan, Gilhooley, Dr. Dedham, and the princess—asserts the temporal authority that preserves a vestige of Eden as a small town way out West. Released in 1963.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Aug. 15 and Aug. 20.)

(500) DAYS OF SUMMER
He (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) is a romantic who studied architecture but is frittering away his salad days writing greeting cards. She (Zooey Deschanel) is a free-spirited cynic floating through life who happens to land in his office as an assistant and, soon, in his bed as a lover. Whether love itself will blossom is the whole story. For a movie about heartfelt connections, its characters have no depth or substance; for one about love, it has no chemistry or spontaneity; the action takes place in Los Angeles, though we see almost none of it; and a reference to "The Graduate" does the film no favors. Forcedly cute, clumsily mechanical, overdetermined, and undernourished, this ostensibly soulful romance is a plastic void. Directed by Marc Webb.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

FROWNLAND
This amazingly accomplished first feature by Ronald Bronstein, made with a crew of four for seemingly little more than the cost of film stock, throbs with the energy and vision that independent filmmaking is all about. The story concerns the struggles of a nearly aphasic, socially challenged, yet smart, painfully self-aware, and desperately lonely young man to get through the days and nights. Keith (Dore Mann) is the odd man out in the group of chirpy losers with whom he works selling coupon books door-to-door; he has a woman friend, Laura (Mary Wall, Bronstein's wife), who is even more tormented and self-destructive than he is, and an irresponsible roommate whose own travails end in ruin. Bronstein specializes in moments of embarrassment and minor emotional bruises which blend pain with gentle, witty humor. With a sharp eye for telling details, he avoids satire and bathos and creates characters of a rare complexity, tracking them empathetically in incisive yet passionate images. The performance by Mann, a nonactor, is astonishing; with clenched jaw, squinting eyes, and stifled speech, he steers clear of stereotypes and brings the character to life from within.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Aug. 14-15.)

FUNNY PEOPLE
Judd Apatow's richest, most complicated movie yet—a hilarious and uneasily brilliant dramatic meditation on the relation of comedy to the rest of life. The movie is filled with Los Angeles comics at many career levels, including three young men (Jason Schwartzman, Seth Rogen, and Jonah Hill) who live together in an apartment and deal with one another via filthy, hostile jokes, and a prickly and friendless wreck of a comedy star (Adam Sandler, in a revelatory performance) who lives in an oppressive Malibu mansion. The star, who is seriously ill and beginning a bitter withdrawal from life, takes one of the young men (Rogen) into his house as a gag writer, punching bag, flunky, and nurse. As an unstable, combative bond develops between them, the star, with his protégé in tow, tries to renew a relationship with an actress he once loved and betrayed (Leslie Mann); he crashes like an errant meteor into the family life that his old flame has established in Northern California. The performing rhythm of the comics, on- and offstage, is dictated by infantile jokes; the rhythm of family life is something entirely different. In the end, comics are heroes for Apatow, but their heroism may cut them off from the kind of existence he believes in. Like "Knocked Up," this movie asks, What does it



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
PRIVATE COLLECTION

The Chinese artist Song Dong keeps a daily diary in water on stone. Why write a life when the words will evaporate? It's a conceptual project with pragmatic roots: growing up during the harsh years of the Cultural Revolution, Song hit on a way to practice calligraphy without squandering paper or ink. "Waste Not," his labyrinthine life-as-art installation, now in MOMA's atrium, pays homage to a more earthbound frugality. For forty years, the artist's mother stockpiled birdcages and bottle caps, jump ropes and toothpaste tubes, mittens and bowls in her small wooden house in Beijing. (A section is on view here, its floor lined with shopping bags, bottles, and cans.) When Song's father died unexpectedly, in 2002, thrift gave way to hoarding, as if stuff could palliate grief. Song persuaded his mother to help him order the chaos into this ramshackle readymade—a humble monument to deprivation, attachment, evanescence, and loss. Duchamp's bicycle wheel (visit it on the museum's fifth floor) would surely approve.

—*Andrea K. Scott*

take to be a husband? With Eric Bana, many L.A. comics (we get a good idea of their backstage rivalries, insults, lingo), and the children of Apatow and Mann, Maude and Iris.—*David Denby* (8/3/09) (In wide release.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

One principle of a successful franchise—see James Bond—used to be that each episode should be able to stand alone, in the hope of attracting the uninitiated. Not so with Harry Potter. The sixth chapter in the history of the boy wonder, based on the penultimate novel in the series, presumes an intricate familiarity with the preceding installments, and with the dramatis personae scattered through them. Our hero (Daniel Radcliffe) is still locked in an alliance with the kindly Dumbledore (Michael Gambon) and in a duel with the powers of malice, led by the absent Voldemort and incarnated in the Malfoy clan. As if that weren't enough to cope with, he and his chums Ron (Rupert Grint) and Hermione (Emma Watson) also find themselves atremble with unwonted stirrings of desire, or, at any rate, with the urge to sit down and mope. Excitement is delivered by a squad of airborne Death Eaters, who bring chaos to London and, in the end, calamity to the school; but, under David Yates's direction, what was once a magical spree grows dark with a willful and unearned solemnity. Only Evanna Lynch, as a batty schoolgirl named Luna Lovegood, seems possessed by the old spirit of fun.—*A.L.* (7/27/09) (In wide release.)

HUMPDAY

Given that Lynn Shelton's new film hails from the stable known as mumblecore, it's pretty loud, full of whinnying debate and gleeful shouts. A young husband and wife, Ben (Mark Duplass) and Anna (Alycia Delmore), are thrown by the arrival of Andrew (Joshua Leonard), a bearded Boudu who was Ben's close friend in college, and who brings with him a gust of the bohemian excess that the married couple like to think (or maybe fear) that they have left behind. During a boozy, pansexual evening, Ben and Andrew conceive a crazy plan: they will contribute to a porno festival by having sex on camera—not just two straight guys but best buddies. Once sobered up, neither wants to back down; they are determined to butch it out, and even Anna, though aghast, gives them the go-ahead. There is a trick here, which Shelton very nearly pulls off: so artless is her approach, with its ambling conversation and hovering, on-the-spot camerawork, and so generous are her actors (Delmore being the standout) that we wind up half-believing what is, by any standard, a ridiculous conceit. As a result, the film is at its best and most convincing as the heroes lose their nerve; bolder viewers will be disappointed, but when did you last see a comedy that built so inexorably toward an anticlimax? With Shelton herself, tellingly cast as the friend who will try anything.—*A.L.* (In limited release.)

THE HURT LOCKER

Over and over, Staff Sergeant William James (Jeremy Renner) walks to a bomb site in a heavy protective suit and tries to figure out how to pull apart the clumsily tangled wires and flimsy triggering devices of an I.E.D. (improvised explosive device). The two other members of James's team, the frightened young Eldridge (Brian Geraghty) and the wary, experienced Sanborn (Anthony Mackie), jerk their guns this way and that, covering him and screaming at anyone who moves. Kathryn Bigelow's movie is set in Baghdad in 2004, and it brings us, from its particular angle, closer to the dangers of the war than any other movie about this conflict. Bigelow keeps the space tight and coherent: no matter how many times she cuts away, you know exactly where James is in relation to the bomb—whether he's in the kill zone or far enough away to be safe. (You can't break up the integrity of space when space is the subject of your movie.) The movie is almost unbearably tense—it's a considerable achievement. With Guy Pearce and Ralph Fiennes in small roles. Written by Mark Boal.—*D.D.* (6/29/09) (In limited release.)

IN THE LOOP

A sour, all-hating satire from the director Armando Iannucci, who fulfills, to a fault, his desire to strip the last tatters of dignity and purpose from his characters. A British cabinet minister (Tom Hollander), his foot barely extricable from his mouth, lets slip an unguarded word about a possible war—looming, unspecified, but not so very far from Iraq. For his pains, he is sent to Washington for further humiliation, accompanied by an aide (Chris Addison) and harried by the Prime Minister's press secretary (Peter Capaldi), who is essentially Beelzebub in a suit. Both he and his equally foul-tongued deputy are Scottish, like Iannucci himself, and there is a definite flavor of jubilant, anti-English scolding in evidence—fitting enough, given the current Prime Minister, though the film's concerns seem more rooted in the era of Tony Blair and President Bush. The U.S. political class is viewed as no less venal than its British equivalent, and no less touched by absurdity, as when a uniformed general (improbably played by James Gandolfini) adds up troop numbers on a child's toy; still, when it comes to an inferiority complex, the Brits stand alone. The film is so mean and cramped to look at that even the sharper jokes, after a while, produce more of a headache than a laugh.—*A.L.* (7/27/09) (In limited release.)

LORNA'S SILENCE

The Belgian directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, who are brothers, make heartrending movies (such as "La Promesse" and "Rosetta") about young people left behind by the postwar European boom; their characters fall into chasms where only the most powerful exercise of will can save them from moral disaster. This impressive new film is centered on Lorna (Arta Dobroshi), a pretty young Albanian woman who illegally purchased Belgian citizenship and lives with a pathetic drug addict of a "husband" (Jérémie Renier). She's disgusted by him, yet when the thugs running the immigration racket want to get rid of him so that Lorna can, in turn, be married off to an incoming Russian, she slowly but sturdily revolts. The Dardennes have little interest in psychology; their approach is to report on actions (incessant movements around Liège, money and keys changing hands in brief meetings) and to allow us to draw our own conclusions. The movie builds up enormous tension through the simplest means and then bursts into a flight of exultant lyricism. In French, Albanian, and Russian.—*D.D.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MOONFLEET

Fritz Lang's 1955 historical adventure film, set on the British coast in 1757, offers one of the cinema's most tender depictions of a lost child's deliverance. The title refers to a waterfront town that's run by Jeremy Fox (the slim, imperious Stewart Granger), a wayward gentleman who heads a cutthroat band of smugglers operating out of pubs and crypts. His merry life is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of John Mohune (Jon Whiteley), the orphaned boy of the woman he loved, and whose ancestral manor Fox inhabits and John dreams of restoring to its former glory. On the verge of shipping the boy off to school, Fox is struck by his spirit, wit, and daring, and keeps him around despite the likely inconvenience, and possible danger. Their relationship, in which action overrides word and burns away sentimentality, is a model of understated passion, and Lang, in his handling of mercurial violence (the film features several brilliant set pieces), sketches, with a razor-sharp touch, the bloody turmoil that their bond resists. The implacable images and terse performances bring forth extraordinary depths of emotion.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Aug. 15.)

NOT QUITE HOLLYWOOD

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Village East Cinemas.)

THE PROPOSAL

In this wannabe screwball comedy written by Peter Chiarelli and directed by Anne Fletcher, a tyrannical book publisher (Sandra Bullock) and her harried assistant (Ryan Reynolds) are forced into marriage to prevent her deportation to Canada. A host of overly familiar contrivances are introduced to get these polar opposites together for a typical Hollywood ending, but, along the way, Bullock and Reynolds attack their roles with real gusto (they have great chemistry), and a strong supporting cast (including Betty White, Craig T. Nelson, and Mary Steenburgen) keeps the action moving briskly. The film shamelessly meets audience expectations with good-natured charm; it's romantic comedy as comfort food.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT RUDD

"LUSCIOUS, DISHY FUN."
- Owen Gleiberman, Entertainment Weekly

"REVEALS THE IMPENETRABLE MYSTIQUE OF ANNA WINTOUR."
- Kim Masters, The Sundance Channel

"JUICY... A GREAT ONE TO WATCH."
- Betsy Sharkey, Los Angeles Times

"COMPLETELY ADDICTIVE."
- Andrew O'Hehir, Salon.com

"REMARKABLE."
- Monita Rajpal, CNN

"IMMENSELY ENJOYABLE."
- Krista Smith, Vanity Fair

"FASHION-LOVING FILM BUFFS WILL RELISH 'THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE'. THE FILM CAPTURES THE UNIQUE PASSION AND DELICATE RELATIONSHIPS THAT MAKE EACH PAGE OF 'VOGUE' A REALITY."
- Meghan Cass, Women's Wear Daily

"FASCINATING."
- Owen Gleiberman, Entertainment Weekly

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IN THEATRES THIS FALL

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PUBLIC ENEMIES

Michael Mann's ravishing dream of violent gangster life in the thirties. The scowling men in long dark coats and hats, led by the severely elegant John Dillinger (Johnny Depp), march into some grand Midwestern bank, take over the place, throw the cash in bags, and make their getaway, jumping onto the running boards of flat-topped black Fords. The blazing tommy guns emit little spearheads of flame, just as in a comic book. Despite all the violence, the movie is aesthetically shaped and slightly distanced by the pictorial verve of gangland effrontery—the public aggression that Mann makes inseparable from high style. Mann and Depp have made Dillinger a gentleman thug, loyal to his friends and to his hatcheck girlfriend, Billie Frechette, played by Marion Cotillard with a combination of desperate hope and fear that is enormously appealing. The movie chronicles not only Dillinger's wild final months but the parallel rise of organized crime and the F.B.I. With his cheekbones built up and his handsome features on the verge of disappearing into jowls, Billy Crudup plays the young but already insufferable J. Edgar Hoover as a bullying, righteous, and wary man, a natural-born populist authoritarian. One of Mann's wittiest accomplishments is to recapture the stiffly formal side of official life in the thirties—the sound of a newly powerful country trying to impress itself with its own importance. With the dour Christian Bale as Melvin Purvis, who commanded the pursuit of Dillinger.—*D.D.* (7/6 & 13/09) (In wide release.)

TIGER BAY

Hayley Mills, at the age of thirteen, made an astounding début in J. Lee Thompson's 1959 suspense film, as a tough eleven-year-old Cardiff girl who sees a returning Polish sailor (Horst Buchholz) murder his unfaithful lover (Yvonne Mitchell). This child never stops crying wolf: she's a playactor and a prevaricator who responds to perceived slights and real dangers by telling bigger and better whoppers. Mills navigates the psychic roller coaster with gusto, and she forges a touching connection with Buchholz's vivid, emotionally chaotic seaman, who desperately wants to see himself as a good man despite his crime of passion. Add Hayley's father, John, as the police superintendent—his scenes with her are marvels of dense manipulation—and Thompson's eye-opening look at Cardiff's multicultural underclass, and you've got a minor classic, even with the corny music and the rudimentary plot mechanics.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Aug. 16-17.)

TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN

Two sets of leaden-voiced plastic-and-metal monsters, the Autobots and the Decepticons, having failed to settle their differences over a parking space on an alien planet, fight it out on Earth—with human beings, in the dubious form of the young couple Shia LaBeouf and Megan Fox, in the middle. Apart from the frustrating truth that it's impossible, much of the time, to tell the warring creatures apart—both kinds are huge, black, gleaming, and clanking, with many arms and appendages—they obey no rules that would make their combats a struggle of courage against limitation and therefore worth caring about. Achilles and Hector had spears and shields. These things can fly, climb, bash things, bore holes, change shape back into cars or trucks, dance the cancan in the pre-First World War Folies-Bergère. There isn't much they can't do, and their endless struggles are redundant and undifferentiated. Directed by the stunningly, almost viciously untalented Michael Bay.—*D.D.* (7/6 & 13/09) (In wide release.)

THE UGLY TRUTH

The title of this wan romantic comedy, directed by Robert Luketic, refers to a small-market public-access cable show featuring Mike (Gerard Butler), a rough-hewn hunk who spews frat-boy wisdom at lonely women. One of them, Abby (Katherine Heigl), a TV producer who despises his show, is forced to work with him when her station hires him to boost ratings. When she has trouble winning the heart of the well-mannered surgeon next door (Eric Winter), she accepts his offer of counsel. The biggest surprise is how little the screenwriters, Nicole Eastman, Karen McCullah Lutz, and Kirsten Smith—the latter two of "Legally Blonde" (also directed by Luketic)—do with the sturdy plot. Their exposition of the theme of work as life's crucial meeting place is the only good thing in the movie. The actors do their jobs and are easy to watch, but it's hard to avoid the impression that the collective inspiration is running on empty.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

THE COVE: In limited release. **ORPHAN:** In wide release. **THIRST:** In limited release. **A WOMAN IN BERLIN:** Angelika Film Center. **YOO HOO, MRS. GOLDBERG:** In limited release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Films by Jerry Jofen. Aug. 6 at 8: Short-film program, including "Rituals and Demonstrations" (1977). ♦ "William Lustig Presents: The Seventies—Buried Treasures." Aug. 7 at 7 and Aug. 13 at 9:15: "The Stone Killer" (1973, Michael Winner). ♦ Aug. 7 at 9:30, Aug. 9 at 4, and Aug. 13 at 7: "The Outfit" (1973, John Flynn). ♦ Aug. 8 at 2:45 and Aug. 10 at 7: "The Outside Man" (1972, Jacques Deray). ♦ Aug. 8 at 5 and Aug. 10 at 9:15: "Sitting Target" (1972, Douglas Hickox). ♦ Aug. 8 at 7 and Aug. 11 at 9: "Rolling Thunder" (1977, Flynn). ♦ Aug. 8 at 9:30 and Aug. 11 at 7: "Welcome Home, Soldier Boys" (1972, Richard Compton). ♦ Aug. 9 at 6:15 and Aug. 12 at 9: "Freebie and the Bean" (1974, Richard Rush). ♦ Aug. 9 at 8:45 and Aug. 12 at 7: "Busting" (1974, Peter Hyams). ♦ Special screenings. Aug. 7-13 at 7:15 and 9:15: "Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania" (1971-72, Jonas Mekas). ♦ Through Aug. 23: "One-Eyed Auteurs." Aug. 14 at 7 and Aug. 18 at 9: "Ramrod" (1947, André de Toth). ♦ Aug. 14 at 9 and Aug. 18 at 7: "Pitfall" (1948, de Toth). ♦ Aug. 15 at 2:30 and Aug. 20 at 9:30: "Donovan's Reef" (†). ♦ Aug. 15 at 4:45 and Aug. 20 at 6:45: "They Were Expendable" (1945, John Ford). ♦ Aug. 15 at 7:30: "You and Me" (1938, Fritz Lang). ♦ Aug. 15 at 9:30: "Moonfleet" (†). ♦ Aug. 16 at 2:15 and Aug. 17 at 9:15: "The True Story of Jesse James" (1957, Nicholas Ray). ♦ Aug. 16 at 4:15 and Aug. 17 at 7: "Flying Leathernecks" (1951, Ray). ♦ Aug. 16 at 6:30: "The Tall Men" (1955, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Aug. 16 at 9: "The World in His Arms" (1952, Walsh).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The films of Cary Grant. Aug. 5 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Holiday" (1938, George Cukor). ♦ Aug. 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House" (1948, H. C. Potter). ♦ Aug. 8 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "The Talk of the Town" (1942, George Stevens). ♦ Aug. 9 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Suspicion" (1941, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Aug. 10 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Ladies Should Listen" (1934, Frank Tuttle) and "Born to Be Bad" (1934, Lowell Sherman). ♦ Aug. 11 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Topper" (1937, Norman McLeod). ♦ Aug. 13 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Penny Serenade" (1941, Stevens). ♦ Aug. 14 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Philadelphia Story" (1940, Cukor). ♦ Aug. 15 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "To Catch a Thief" (1955, Hitchcock). ♦ Aug. 16 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Awful Truth" (1937, Leo McCarey). ♦ Aug. 17 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Big Brown Eyes" (1936, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Aug. 18 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Only Angels Have Wings" (1939, Howard Hawks).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Nicholas Ray. Aug. 5 at 1:30, 5:30, and 9:30: "The Lusty Men" (1952). The 9:30 screening will be introduced by Ray's daughter Nicca Ray. ♦ Aug. 5 at 3:40 and 7:40: "The True Story of Jesse James" (1957). ♦ Aug. 6 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Party Girl" (1958). ♦ Through Sept. 3: "Brit Noir." Aug. 7-8 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "The Third Man" (1949, Carol Reed). ♦ Aug. 9 at 1:30, 5:30, and 9:30: "Seven Days to Noon" (1950, John Boulting). ♦ Aug. 9 at 3:30 and 7:30: "The Small Back Room" (1949, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger). ♦ Aug. 10 at 1:45, 5:20, and 9: "On the Night of the Fire" (1939, Brian Desmond Hurst). ♦ Aug. 10 at 3:35 and 7:15: "They Drive by Night" (1938, Arthur Woods). ♦ Aug. 11 at 1:30, 5:05, and 8:40: "Footsteps in the Fog" (1955, Arthur Lubin). ♦ Aug. 11 at 3:15 and 6:50: "Blanche Fury" (1948, Marc Allégret). ♦ Aug. 12 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Hell Is a City" (1959, Val Guest). ♦ Aug. 13 at 1:30, 5:40, and 9:50: "So Evil My Love" (1948, Lewis Allen). ♦ Aug. 13 at 3:40 and 7:50: "The Brothers" (1947, David MacDonald). ♦ Aug. 14 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "It Always Rains on Sunday" (1947, Robert Hamer). ♦ Aug. 14-15 at 2:45, 6:25, and 10:05: "Night and the City" (1950, Jules Dassin). ♦ Aug. 16 at 1:30, 5:25, and 9:20 and Aug. 17 at 1:30: "Tiger Bay" (†). ♦ Aug. 16 at 3:30 and 7:25 and Aug. 17 at 3:30: "Victim" (1961, Basil Dearden). ♦ Aug. 17 at 6 and 9:30: "The Seventh Veil" (1945, Compton Bennett). ♦ Aug. 17 at 7:50: "I Met a Murderer" (1939, Roy Kellino). ♦ Aug. 18 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "So Long at the Fair" (1950, Antony Darnborough and Terence Fisher). ♦ Aug. 18 at 2:40, 6:10, and 9:40: "The Clouded Yellow" (1951, Ralph Thomas).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—The films of Ang Lee. Aug. 5 at 6:15: "The Ice Storm" (1997). ♦ Aug. 5 at 8:30 and Aug. 9 at 2:30: "Hulk" (2003). ♦ Aug. 6 at 9: "The Wedding Banquet" (1993; in Mandarin and English). ♦ Aug. 7 at 6:15 and Aug. 8 at 8:30: "Lust, Caution" (2007). ♦ Aug. 7 at 9:15, Aug. 8 at 5:45, and Aug. 11 at 6:30: "Brokeback Mountain" (2005). ♦ Aug. 8 at 1: "Sense and Sensibility" (1995). ♦ Aug. 8 at 3:35: "Pushing Hands" (1992; in Mandarin and English). ♦ Aug. 9 at 5:15 and Aug. 10 at 2 and 7:30: "Ride with the Devil: Director's Cut" (1999), followed by a Q. & A. with Lee and the producer James Schamus. ♦ Aug. 9 at 8:10, Aug. 10 at 4:50, and Aug. 11 at 9:10: "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" (2000; in Mandarin). ♦ Special screenings. Aug. 6 at 6:30: "What's the Matter with Kansas?" (2008, Joe Winston), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Aug. 13-14 at 2, Aug. 15 at 5:15, and Aug. 16 at 6:30: "Drama/Mex" (2006, Gerardo Naranjo; in Spanish). ♦ Aug. 17 at 8:30: "Amreeka" (2009, Cherien Dabis).

IFC CENTER

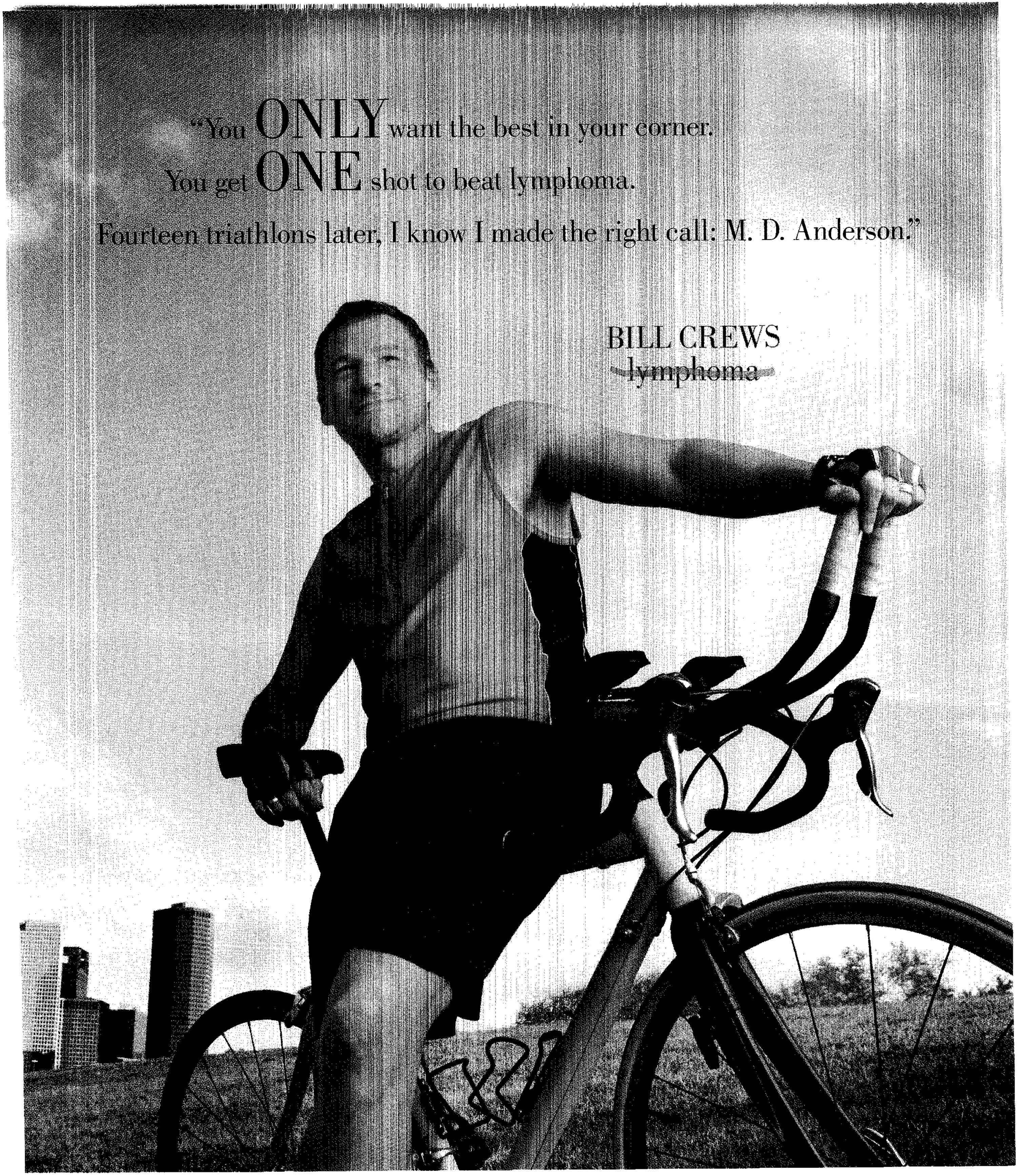
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"DocuWeeks 2009." Aug. 7 at noon and 5:50, Aug. 8 and Aug. 11 at 1:45 and 7:40, Aug. 9 and Aug. 12 at 3:25 and 9:45, Aug. 10 at 5:50 and 9:50, and Aug. 13 at 2:15 and 5:40: "Dirt! The Movie" (2009, Bill Benenson). ♦ Aug. 7 at 1:25 and 8, Aug. 8 and Aug. 11 at 2:55 and 9:50, Aug. 9 and Aug. 12 at noon and 4:30, and Aug. 10 and Aug. 13 at 1:25 and 6:05: "Split Estate" (2009, Debra Anderson). ♦ Aug. 7 and Aug. 10 at 1:45 and 7:40, Aug. 8 and Aug. 11 at 3:30 and 9:45, Aug. 9 and Aug. 12 at noon and 5:15, and Aug. 13 at 3:55 and 9:50: "Soundtrack for a Revolution" (2009, Bill Guttentag and Dan Sturman). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Aug. 7-8: "Barton Fink" (1991, Joel Coen). ♦ Aug. 7-8: "Eraserhead" (1977, David Lynch). ♦ Aug. 14-15: "The Man Who Wasn't There" (2001, Coen). ♦ Aug. 14-15: "The Inglorious Bastards" (1978, Enzo G. Castellari). ♦ "Movie Nights with Jem Cohen." Aug. 11 at 7:30: "Empires of Tin" (2009, Jem Cohen). ♦ In revival. Aug. 14-16 at 11 A.M.: "Monika" (1953, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish).

MUSEUM AT ELDRIDGE STREET

Eldridge Street Synagogue, 12 Eldridge St., between Canal and Division Sts. (212-219-0888)—Silent films featuring Max Davidson. Aug. 6 at 8: Short-film program, including "Why Girls Say No" (1927, Leo McCarey; silent).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Recent Film Acquisitions: Continuum." Aug. 5 at 4: "The Lion in Winter" (1968, Anthony Harvey). ♦ Aug. 5 at 7 and Aug. 6 at 4: "Wild Reeds" (1994, André Téchiné; in French). ♦ Aug. 6 at 7: "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" (2001, Peter Jackson). ♦ Aug. 7 at 4 and Aug. 8 at 1:30: "Night Nurse" (1931, William Wellman). ♦ Aug. 7 at 7: "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" (2002, Jackson). ♦ Aug. 8 at 4 and Aug. 16 at 2: "Santiago" (2006, João Moreira Salles). ♦ Aug. 8 at 7:30: "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" (2003, Jackson). ♦ Aug. 9 at 2 and Aug. 10 at 7: "Little Chil-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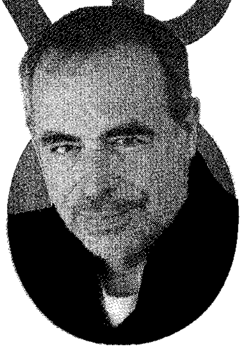

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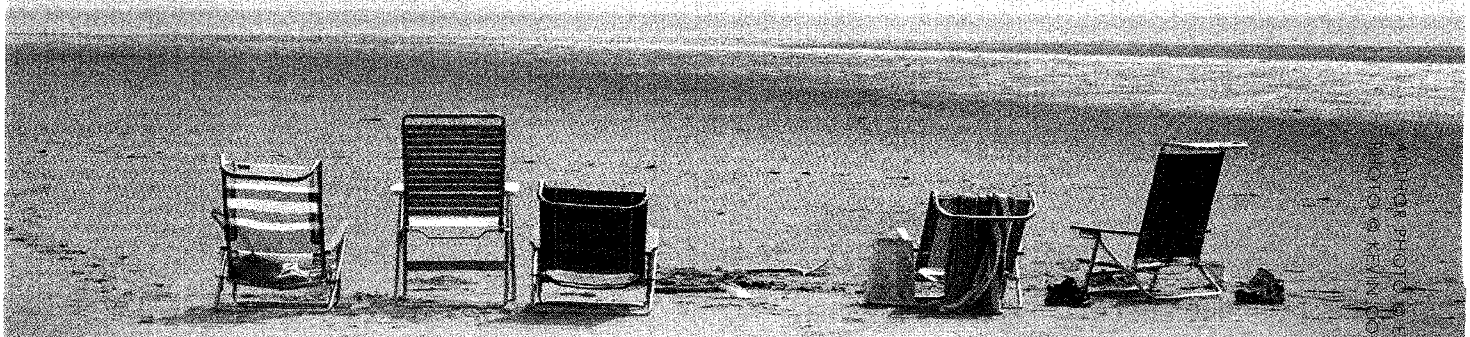
CAPE MAGIC



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"In one of America's most mythic landscapes, Russo details one man's shaky first steps out of his past and into self-knowledge with good humor, generosity, and an open heart." —O, THE OPRAH MAGAZINE

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dren" (2006, Todd Field). ♦ Aug. 9 at 5 and Aug. 10 at 4: "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly" (2007, Julian Schnabel). ♦ Aug. 12 at 4 and Aug. 14 at 7: "Venus" (2006, Roger Michell). ♦ Aug. 12 at 7 and Aug. 17 at 4: "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (1975, Milos Forman). ♦ Aug. 13 and Aug. 15 at 4: "The Inner Life of Martin Frost" (2007, Paul Auster). ♦ Aug. 13 at 7 and Aug. 16 at 5: "Lady Chatterley" (2006, Pascale Ferran; in French). ♦ Aug. 14 at 4 and Aug. 15 at 7:30: "Frownland" (†). ♦ Aug. 15 at 1:30: "Spellbound" (1945, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Aug. 17 at 7: "Happy Go Lucky" (2008, Mike Leigh).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Aug. 30: "French New Wave Essentials." All screenings will be held at the Museum of Arts and Design, 2 Columbus Circle (212-299-7777). All films are in French. Aug. 8-9 at 2: "Cléo from 5 to 7" (1961, Agnès Varda). ♦ Aug. 8-9 at 4: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy). ♦ Aug. 15-16 at 2: "Alphaville" (1964, Jean-Luc Godard). ♦ Aug. 15-16 at 4: "Les Bonnes Femmes" (1960, Claude Chabrol).

READINGS AND TALKS

"WORD FOR WORD"

Bryant Park's reading series continues with a program focussing on "Read Hard: Five Years of Great Writing from *The Believer*." The writer Starlee Kine will talk with Arthur Phillips, James Hannaham, Jessica Anthony, Brandon Stosuy, and Joe Hagan about their contributions to the magazine. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 212-768-4242. Aug. 5 at 12:30.)

CORNELIA STREET CAFÉ

The actor Paul Hecht reads Tennyson's "Enoch Arden" while the pianist Audrey St. Gil plays a piece by Richard Strauss, in celebration of the poet's two-hundredth birthday. (29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. Aug. 6 at 7.)

SOLAS

St. Mark's Bookshop presents a reading series at this watering hole, which is just around the corner from the East Village shop. On Aug. 6 at 7:30, John Joseph, the lead singer of the underground punk band the Cro-Mags, reads from his memoir, "Evolution of a Cro-Magnon." (232 E. 9th St. No tickets necessary.)

"UPSTAIRS AT THE SQUARE"

The pairing of writers and musicians at the Union Square Barnes & Noble celebrates its third anniversary, with appearances by the singer-songwriter Regina Spektor and the writer Kurt Andersen. (33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary. Aug. 18 at 7.)

"SUMMER SCOOPS"

The *Wall Street Journal* has organized a series of talks about popular culture. On Aug. 18 at 7, the musician Stew, his longtime collaborator Heidi Rodewald, and the choreographer Bill T. Jones will discuss the highs and lows of artistic partnerships with the *Journal* editor Wendy Bounds. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. For more information, visit www.wsj.com/live.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

HONG KONG DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

The racing of dragon boats—grand, custom-made teak vessels decorated like the mythical creature and manned by up to eighteen paddlers and a drummer—is a two-thousand-year-old tradition in China. This free festival in Queens is only in its nineteenth year, but it is one of the largest and oldest dragon-boat gatherings in the United States—more than a hundred and forty-five teams will compete. In addition to the racing, there is a multicultural food court, as well as music, dance, and martial-arts performances. (Meadow Lake, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. For more information, visit www.hkdbf-ny.org. Aug. 8-9.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

In the desert of summer auctions, **Swann's** colorful sale of vintage posters is an oasis. The selection on Aug. 5 includes some serious images, such as the unforgettable First World War poster exhorting young men to "ENLIST," the giant letters suspended beneath a haunting image of two ghostly victims of the Lusitania disaster, a veritable Madonna and Child. But, for the most part, the posters in the sale, some of which date back to the nineteenth century, are happy evocations of pleasurable and chic destinations such as Cannes, Monte Carlo, Biarritz, Hawaii, and Mykonos; in one particularly lovely example, an impossibly elegant couple surveys the manicured grounds of a fancy hotel at Saint-Honoré-les-Bains, circa 1928. The auction also features a series of sports posters celebrating football, track and field, and baseball. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

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Natalie Wood in "Inside Daisy Clover."

PAUL WILLOUGHBY

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
TOUCHING WOOD
Aug. 19-25

From her first credited role, at the age of eight, in "Tomorrow Is Forever" (1946), Natalie Wood was an arresting onscreen presence. Film Society of Lincoln Center's retrospective of Wood's career offers this film, along with such later classics as "Rebel Without a Cause," "West Side Story," and "Inside Daisy Clover," a 1966 drama about Hollywood in the thirties. (212-875-5610.)

NIGHT LIFE
SOUL KINGS
Aug. 28-29

The Brooklyn Soul Festival, which is organized by the singer Eli (Paperboy) Reed and the folks behind the Dig Deeper soul parties, brings singers including Otis Clay, Roscoe Robinson, and Hermon Hitson to the Bell House. (www.myspace.com/digdeepernyc.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SUPERSIZED
Aug. 29-Sept. 7

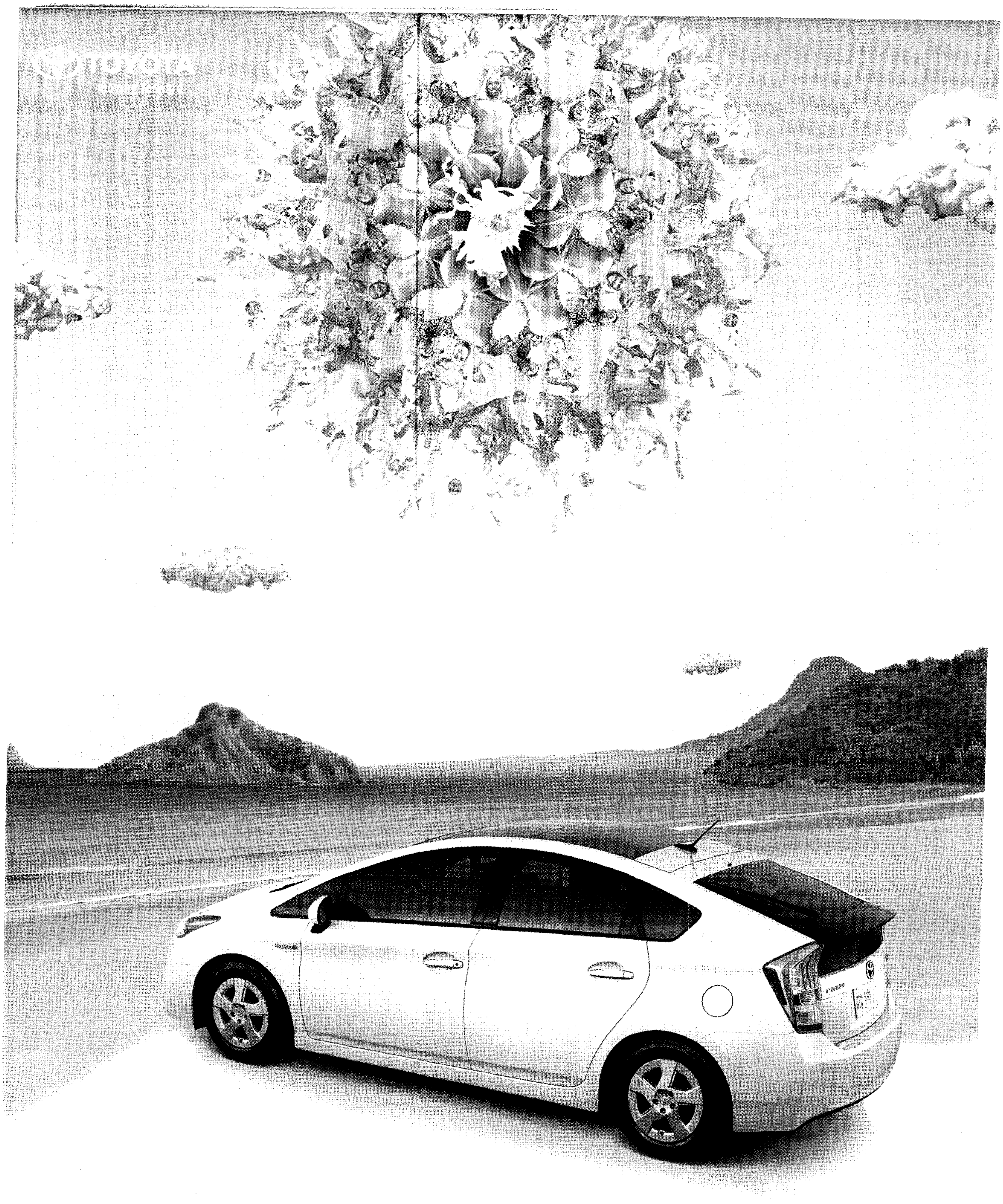
The days when the Met mounted operas in New York City parks during the summer seem to be over for good. Replacing them is a series of free HD screenings of recent productions in Lincoln Center Plaza; the first is of Donizetti's "La Fille du Régiment," with Natalie Dessay and Juan Diego Flórez. (www.metoperafamily.org.)

THE THEATRE
DIE ANOTHER DAY
Sept. 10

Daniel Craig, a.k.a. James Bond, and Hugh Jackman, a.k.a. Wolverine, star as Chicago cops who are best friends torn apart by one event, in "A Steady Rain." The two-hander, by Keith Huff, premièred in Chicago in 2007; John Crowley directs, at the Schoenfeld. (212-239-6200.)

ART
IN THE ABSTRACT
Sept. 18-Jan. 13

It's been almost twenty-five years since the great Russian painter and theorist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) had a big retrospective in the U.S. The Guggenheim, which has collected the artist's work in depth since it was founded, in 1948, will trace Kandinsky's approach to abstraction in some hundred paintings. (212-423-3500.)



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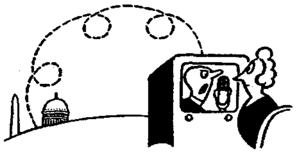
THE NEW YORKER

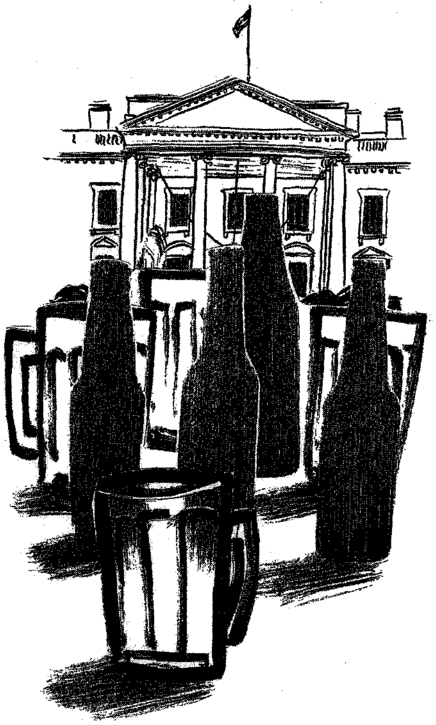
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DISCRIMINATING TASTES



The Reverend Jeremiah Wright, President Obama's former pastor, has often described his preaching style as prophetic, and, sure enough, his brief but spectacular turn in the campaign limelight last year has proved a harbinger of things to come. After months of criticism, Obama renounced Wright, whose fiery sermons had been widely excoriated as "racist"—that is, anti-white. Around the same time, Obama explained that when he described his grandmother as a "typical white person," he hadn't meant to insult white people. Then, following the Inauguration, some protested that the Reverend Joseph Lowery's benediction, derived from an old blues song, was anti-white. And Newt Gingrich used his Twitter account to call Obama's Supreme Court nominee, Judge Sonia Sotomayor—and her "wise Latina" remark—"racist." (A few days later, he took it back.)

One imagines that Sergeant James Crowley, of the Cambridge Police Department, had not meant to contribute to this ongoing argument when, on July 16th, he responded to a 911 call from a woman who said that there had been "two gentlemen trying to get in a house," and, after a dispute, ended up arresting Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the Harvard professor who lives there. One imagines the same of President Obama, who, when asked about the incident during a press conference the next week, said that racial profiling was a nationwide problem, and that, in this case, the police had "acted stupidly." Critics claimed that Obama's comments reflected his own biases. Thaddeus McCotter, a Republican congressman from Michigan, drafted a resolution calling on him to apologize to Crowley. *National Review Online* accused him of "racial self-aggrandizement." And the radio and television host Glenn Beck said that the President had revealed his "deep-seated hatred for white people," adding, "This guy is, I believe, a racist."



Half a century ago, when people talked about anti-white racism, it was often depicted as a symptom of a broader derangement. In "The Hate That Hate Produced," an influential television documentary about Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, from 1959, Mike Wallace warned viewers about "the rise of black racism" and "black supremacy." (Four years later, a cover story in *Jet* reported that Eartha Kitt considered herself a victim of "reverse racism"; the magazine said that "black supremacists" resented her marriage to a white man.) But, in the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Act and the executive orders that followed, accusations of reverse racism grew less personal and more commonplace. Newspapers printed articles and letters about anti-white discrimination in the workplace. Later, protracted legal battles over affirmative action helped popularize a once novel character: the white civil-rights plaintiff.

Affirmative action, it now seems clear, helped change white America's attitude about race, although not entirely in the way that its creators intended. In 1982, scarcely a decade after President Nixon mandated affirmative action for companies with government contracts, a study published in the *American Sociological Review* found that only twenty-seven per cent of whites thought that blacks had a worse than average chance of suc-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

ceeding in America, while slightly more, about twenty-nine per cent, thought that blacks' opportunities were better than average. Sixty-three per cent thought that racial minorities enjoyed at least a little bit of "unfair" reverse discrimination.

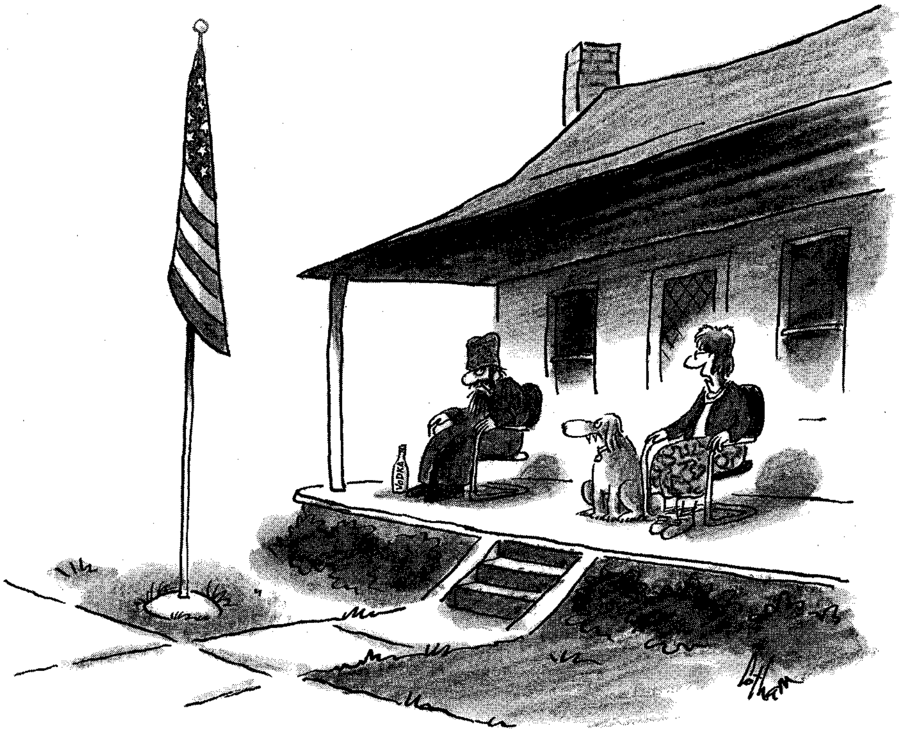
There are plenty of people in America, especially in black America, who believe that reverse racism is a contradiction in terms. Racism, the argument goes, should not be thought of as a personal failing; it's a social system, with a specific history. Discrimination against whites, however unfair, isn't part of that system, and therefore is not analogous to discrimination against blacks. This history adds symbolic weight to stories that might otherwise inspire only passing curiosity—like, say, the one about the black Harvard professor who was suspected of breaking into his own house. Systemic racism doesn't require malice, or a specific perpetrator; everyone who benefits is guilty, even people who don't think that they benefit.

In the past few decades, though, reverse racism has undergone a similar redefinition, from symptom to system. Some who are skeptical of affirmative action, and of other programs designed to advance non-whites, consider reverse racism to be so pervasive, and so well entrenched, that it can only be described as systemic. (Think of Frank Ricci, the white firefighter who argued, successfully, that the city of New Haven had violated his civil rights.) And, despite Beck's diagnosis of Obama's "hatred," many of the people who worry about Obama's view of race see him not as personally bigoted but as complicit with anti-white interests and policies.

In fact, the "reverse" has largely been dropped from "reverse racism"; in today's mainstream political discourse, "racism" regularly refers to anti-white racism. Meanwhile, many politicians and commentators concerned with the brutal legacy of old-fashioned racism have learned to speak about it in less abstract, less inflammatory terms: they talk about too-high incarceration rates, or the need for better communication between police officers and the communities they serve. Certainly, Obama is at his most effective when he sticks to concrete prescriptions (the means) and airy evocations of progress (the end). This, by and large, has been his strategy and his script, and even he may not know exactly why, on being asked about Gates, he strayed from it.

The Cambridge morality play culminated in a much bruited meeting at the White House between Obama, Gates, Crowley, and—a surprise addition—Vice-President Joe Biden. Because the press was kept at a distance, many stations ran surreal, near-silent footage of four men sipping beer, accompanied only by the soothing percussion of clicking cameras. Afterward, there were cheerful but vague reviews from the participants (Crowley, "A cordial and productive discussion"; Gates, "We hit it off"), and promises to keep the conversation going. Obama, for his part, seemed ready, maybe even eager, to change the subject. He had discovered, surely, that a black President can pay a price for talking about racism. And he was no doubt reminded that to some Americans "racism" doesn't mean what it used to.

—*Kelefa Sanneh*



"You know, I've never actually seen your birth certificate."

CATHEDRALS

THE PARK THAT RUTH BUILT

When Shea Stadium was torn down and its site turned into a parking lot for the Mets' new Citi Field earlier this year, nobody seemed to care, least of all historic preservationists. It didn't have that much history, and it was ugly besides. Shea was no Yankee Stadium. But, now that the Yankees have moved to their new $1.5-billion ballpark, the question has arisen as to whether their former home ought to disappear as completely as Shea did. The city has promised to turn the site into a park, complete with three ball fields. But the current design calls for the entire stadium to be demolished, its history recalled mainly through a series of panels and plaques in the pavement.

Adrian Benepe, the parks commissioner, is a supporter of the park plan, but he knows that a lot of fans have never got over the fact that not a trace remains of either Ebbets Field or the Polo Grounds, both of which were replaced by housing projects.

"Yankee Stadium has had papal Masses, Billy Graham's crusade, championship boxing matches, and the rally when Nelson Mandela was freed," Benepe said. "Why can't we create a great new park that acknowledges all of this?"

Benepe and city officials decided to hold a meeting. Rather than gather at

City Hall, they asked if the Yankees would be willing to host a group in the new Stadium. So, the other day, Benepe and a dozen architects, preservationists, and community leaders spent two hours in Suite 7, a double-sized luxury box overlooking first base. The guest list included Lloyd Ultan, the Bronx borough historian; Sherida Paulsen, the former chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission; Rick Bell, from the American Institute of Architects; Tony Morante, the Yankees' historian; and Jose Rodriguez, the district manager of Community Board 4 in the Bronx. Two of the designers for the new park, Gary Sorge and David Vanden-Eynden, also came to talk about their project, which has been given the bland name of Heritage Field.

Suite 7 was set up with a U-shaped table to make it feel more like a boardroom, and the Yankee hosts provided a buffet of Cracker Jacks, Power Bars, nuts, and pretzels. "This is just a brainstorming session," Benepe said.

Sorge started out with a PowerPoint presentation of the design, which he said would have "subtle reminders of the site's past" and would still be "a quality community recreational park." He explained that one of the three ball fields would be set in roughly the position of the old Yankee Stadium diamond, but shifted slightly, so that second base would be atop the original home plate. The plans also called for the reuse of two thirty-foot-long panels of the old Stadium's famous scalloped frieze. And the designers proposed painting two of the park's field light posts to resemble foul poles.

Ultan, the historian, was the first to respond. "What is missing from the design is the architecture of the Stadium itself," he said, holding up a souvenir cookie tin shaped like the old Stadium. "Some people came to see me recently who were trying to save Gate 2, which has not been altered. Couldn't we preserve that as a monument?"

"Our research showed that Gate 2 had been altered," one of the planners said. "It would have to be restored."

"What I'm missing here are the small-scale parts of the Stadium that could be kept," said Bell, who, like Ultan, had brought along his own miniature model of the Stadium. "I find a sense of continuity and authenticity lacking in this park design."

No one wanted to raise the awkward question of how authentic the Stadium is in the first place, since it was so drastically renovated in the nineteen-seventies that not much of the original 1923 structure actually remains. The conversation shifted to the field itself. "Putting second base at home plate doesn't make sense," Paulsen said. "Why can't home plate just be at home plate?"

Sorge explained that the main ball field had to be shifted to allow room for the other two fields. The participants seemed to understand the geometric imperative, but they weren't happy about it.

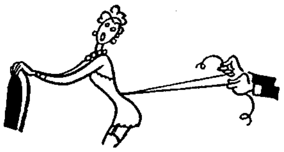
"Some of the most evocative public spaces in the nation are places where great battles took place," Benepe said. "In Central Park, we now have forty or so places where you can dial a phone number and a celebrity tells you a story about that place. You could have Yankees doing that here."

"At least it isn't being replaced by a building," said Wilhelm Ronda, the director of planning for the Bronx borough president's office.

"I'm just happy it isn't going to be like Shea Stadium," another particpant said, "paved over, so where the ballpark was is now where you park your Honda."

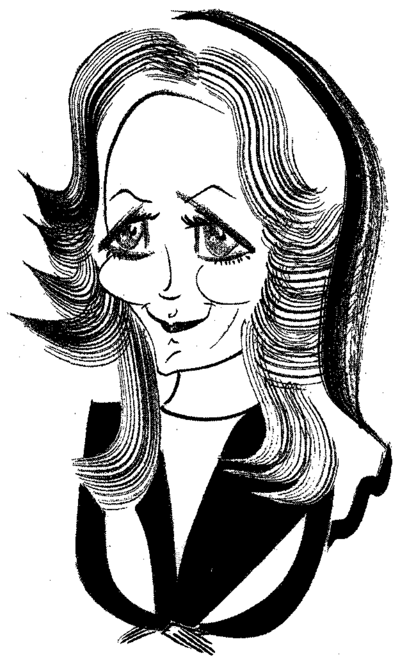
—*Paul Goldberger*

THE PICTURES
ONE OF THE BOYS



Leslie Mann flew in from Los Angeles the other day to promote her new film, "Funny People," on the "Late Show with David Letterman." In-flight, the actress and her husband, Judd Apatow, the movie's writer and director, began to fine tune some anecdotes for her. In the bar at the Four Seasons Hotel, soon after she landed, Mann explained that Apatow, who used to help write "Letterman" bits for stars such as Jim Carrey, "has trained me to be ultra-prepared, to have five stories ready to go. He gives what I say a beginning, a middle, and an end. Whereas I'd just barf it out." She laughed, an intimate cackle that drew amused glances from the nearby booths. "It's really lazy of me to depend on him to make me sound sensible, but so what? I'm lazy."

Turning to the menu, Mann said, "So you'll have the blueberry-lavender mojito?" She was wearing a gray cardigan, a complicated white T-shirt, very short jean shorts, and gold sandals.



Leslie Mann

So far, Mann continued, she and Apatow had three stories roughed out. "First off, we got to go to the Oscars this year, and we sat behind Jennifer Aniston, and there was a lot of standing up and clapping, so I was really able to check her out. You know how she looks so perfect in all the magazines, which kind of makes me feel bad about myself? I thought she must be airbrushed, but I was staring at her ass the whole time: perfect. The perfect, perky ass." She shaped it in the air. "Hair: not a single split end. Skin: tan and glowing, not wrinkly. The lesson seems to be, Go in the sun as much as I want, party more, leave my husband, and have lots of boyfriends. Judd was checking out John Mayer's ass, too, by the way. Also great."

The second tale was about "how these mothers of my daughters' friends ask me about pot. Because Judd makes movies where people are always smoking weed, they think that I'll know where to get some. Do I look like a pot smoker? I do? That's awesome! But I don't do it. I mean, I smoked it in high school, but I didn't like it. All these comedians who hang around Judd, the boys, like Seth and Jonah"—Seth Rogen and Jonah Hill co-star in "Funny People," as they did in Apatow's "Knocked Up"—"used to talk only about pot and porn, but they're outgrowing their dirty ways. Now they talk about duvet covers."

That one wanders a little, doesn't it?

"Yeah, I lost my focus. Probably all the pot I just smoked up in the room."

There was another yarn, about working with Eric Bana, who plays her husband in the film, and how he has big muscles—but Mann got bored halfway through recounting it, and the conversation moved on to other topics, such as Brad Grey, the C.E.O. of Paramount Pictures. "Brad Grey is *handsome*," she declared. "Like, he knows how to give you that look." She narrowed her eyes and smoldered.

Did he maybe practice that?

"That's what it is! Yes! Now I don't find him handsome anymore, at all. Oooh, that's gross—thank you! Thank you for ruining him for me."

Mann went on to say that she doesn't think of herself as a comic actress. "If anything, I take things too seriously," she said. At one point in "Funny People," she slips into a deep, mannered voice that, she explained, was "my impression of Nicole Kidman in 'The Hours.' I just try to be a dramatic actress, and it comes out wrong, which seems to be funny." The scorn that Mann's characters radiate nearly masks their heartache at being neglected. "I'm not really interested in doing a traditional romantic comedy where everything ties up neatly. If I tried to do those roles that Jennifer Aniston is so good at, which are from here"—she indicated her head—"not from here"—she framed her gut—"I would *ruin* them."

What would she have to do to get cast in those roles?

"Take a Xanax," she said, cackling. But didn't she recently star with Matthew Perry in the breezy "17 Again"?

"'17 Again' was playing on our flight," she said. "I looked around, and no one was watching it. I was like, 'C'mon people, what's wrong with you!'" After a moment—not a scripted Aniston beat but a sneaky Mann pause—she added, "I didn't watch it, either."

—*Tad Friend*

HOMAGE DEPT.
BEING JONI

On one hand, it's easy to understand why John Kelly gets called a drag queen. His best-known and longest-running work is his performance as Joni Mitchell. "It's become my 'Bolero,'" he said the other day. During these shows—the first was at the inaugural Wigstock festival, in 1985—Kelly channels the Canadian queen of singer-songwriters at different points in her career, borrowing lines from her interviews for his between-song banter, playing a dulcimer that was a gift from Mitchell herself, and singing everything from "Chelsea Morning" to "Sex Kills" in a lustrous contralto, all while wearing a dress and a blond wig.

"My sisters used to listen to her music a lot," Kelly said. "There was a certain lyricism, wanderlust, soliloquy . . . which I was able to dive into." Though his physical and vocal likeness to Mitchell is hardly uncanny, the intensity of his portrayal achieves a spooky depth: Mitchell has said that the first time she saw Kelly's act she "came braced for a lampooning," but the performance made her feel instead like "Huck Finn attending his own funeral."

But, given Kelly's thirty-year career as a painter, opera singer, actor, fashion illustrator, tightrope walker, musician, and ballet dancer, it's also easy to understand his mild frustration at being reduced to the cross-dresser who "does" Joni. "Do you think people say to Cate Blanchett, 'Oh, you do Dylan—who else do you do?'" Kelly asked, smirking, as he walked through Chelsea on a hot afternoon on his way to Alexander Gray's gallery, where a show of his paintings, called "The Mirror Stages: Self-Portraits, 1979-2009," was on view. Over the years, Kelly has embodied dozens of artists. He has told the short life story of the Austrian Expressionist Egon Schiele through dance. He has performed at Carnegie Hall as Dagmar Onassis, the imaginary love child of Maria Callas and Aristotle Onassis. And hanging on the walls of Gray's gallery were Kelly's paintings and drawings of himself as the Mona Lisa, as Caravaggio's Medusa, as van Gogh, and, of course, as Joni Mitchell. In one of the paintings he appears just as himself, perhaps when he was a bit younger: handsome, muscular, with a shaved head. "That's my Dorian Gray portrait," he said. "Well, in a way they all are."

Kelly, who is forty-nine, grew up in Jersey City, and, at seventeen, he entered the American Ballet Theatre School. Asked if his parents were pleased to have raised a ballerino, he replied, "Jersey City? No. What they said was: 'What'll you do when you're forty?'" He added, "If there were one thing that would brand a man or a boy as gay, it would be ballet, maybe more than being a hairdresser. Maybe not. Maybe fifty-fifty."

But drag is even gayer, and in the eighties Kelly fell in love with it. "When I first started doing drag, it was the most fucked-up thing I could think of," he said. "It was venting a lot of rage. . . . It was punk. It literally changed my life." Toward the end of the Joni Mitchell show, which he will perform this week at the River to River Festival in Battery Park, Kelly suddenly sheds his costume, creating a moment that is strangely profound: when he steps out of his role and faces the audience, you find yourself unsettled, affected. He often gets a standing ovation. "I'm very proud of that moment," he said. "It's a really old theatrical device with gender performance. The trapeze artist in the twenties, at the end of his act he would take off his wig." (Kelly abandoned his own trapeze career in 2003, after he broke his neck.) "It does mess with people, even though it's a clichéd device—'Victor/Victoria,' the whole thing."

After leaving the gallery, Kelly took a stroll along the High Line. "The recession has cleared out some of the traipsing hordes of yuppies," he noted. "It's like, 'You're arrogant and obnoxious and I'm . . . old.'" Asked why he didn't contribute to a recent Mitchell tribute album (it included songs from Björk and Prince), he said, "I would love to have done it, but I wasn't asked." Having so many different vocations, he fears, makes him invisible. "It's not lauded, it's suspect," he said. "Connecting the dots, that's the challenge for an aesthetic octopus like me."

—*Ariel Levy*

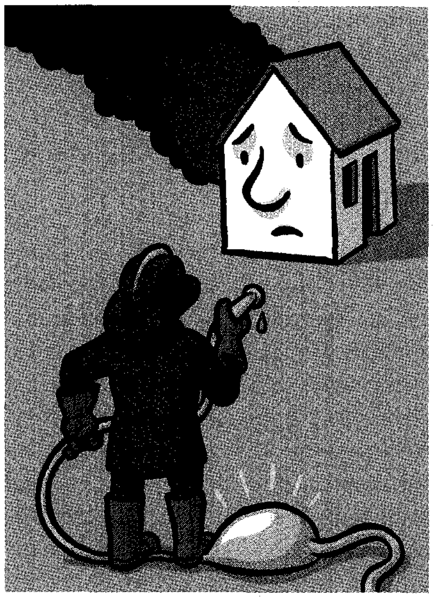
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
NOT HOME YET

Last week, when the Obama Administration sat down in Washington with the country's biggest mortgage servicers, it was sending a clear message: it's time for banks to be more aggressive in modifying the mortgages of troubled borrowers. But the meeting was also a tacit admission that, while the government has managed the effects of the housing crisis reasonably well, it's had less success in dealing with the crisis itself. Even as the economy seems to be stabilizing, mortgage delinquencies continue to rise, with nearly two million foreclosure filings already this year.

To be fair, a variety of things have been tried to stop the foreclosure boom, but the results haven't been encouraging. Last year, Congress enacted the cruelly misnamed Hope for Homeowners program: its restrictions are so tight that, in its first three months of existence, it got applications from barely three *hundred* homeowners. The Obama Administration has done better, rolling out a seventy-five-billion-dollar mortgage-modification program, which offers mortgage servicers financial incentives to renegotiate loans. So far, it's managed a couple of hundred thousand mortgages, but that's been dwarfed by the rising number of foreclosures.

These programs have struggled for numerous reasons: servicers often don't have the ability to do renegotiations in bulk and sometimes make more money by dragging their feet; securitized mortgages make modification more complicated; and borrowers often aren't sure if they're eligible. But the biggest problem may be that the programs are based on a faulty assumption: that modifying mortgages makes everyone—borrowers and lenders alike—better off. The idea is that since renegotiating a mortgage saves banks the hassle of foreclosing on a house, watching it sit empty, selling it at a bargain-basement price, and so on, renegotiation makes economic sense for lenders. Give lenders a nudge to start acting sensibly, and you can stop foreclosures at a relatively small cost.

It's a comforting idea. Unfortunately, it isn't true. In fact, according to a recent paper by economists at the Boston Fed, foreclosing is often more profitable for lenders than renegotiating is. There are two reasons for this. First, about thirty per cent of delinquent borrowers "self-cure"—after missing a payment or two, they get back on track without any help from the bank. Second, between thirty and forty-five per cent of people who do have their mortgages modified end up defaulting eventually anyway. In both cases, modification leaves the bank worse off. Reluctance to modify mortgages isn't always a matter of obstinacy or ineptitude. It's a matter of profit: banks are doing what makes sense for their bottom line.



If we really want to keep people in their homes, then, nudges and renegotiations probably aren't going to do it. We need more direct action. One option, which the banking lobby killed earlier this year, would be to allow "cramdowns": let bankruptcy judges reduce the principal on homeowners' mortgages. Another, even more direct option is simply to give aid to homeowners: one proposal would have the government make low-interest loans, or even grants, to people who have suffered a steep decline in income and have negative equity in their homes. That would target the aid at the people who need it most: as another Boston Fed paper shows, defaults are most likely to happen not just because interest payments are set too high but because of income shocks (usually after the loss of a job) and plummeting house prices.

Even though direct aid would likely keep more people in their homes than current measures, the idea hasn't gained much traction, not just because Americans are wary of spending more money but also because it would exacerbate our concerns about fairness. When Obama's current plan was floated, public support was widespread but grudging; by a two-to-one margin, voters described it as unfair to ordinary homeowners. There's a phenomenon in charity called the "identifiable victim" effect: the best way to get people to give is to focus on one person who's going to benefit from the donation, rather than on a large group. When it comes to government programs, though, identifiability seems to be more a curse than a blessing. No one was happy about bailing out big financial institutions, after all, but the news that a group of A.I.G. employees were going to get bonuses really set people off. In a similar way, while voters may reluctantly support making refinancing easier or helping people lower their interest payments, they're likely to balk at the idea of literally paying the mortgage of the guy down the street.

That may change if the foreclosure crisis deepens and if the slow pace of modifications doesn't pick up. Foreclosures, after all, have a sizable impact on surrounding homes—one estimate suggests that the foreclosures in this crisis have erased two hundred billion dollars in property value—so the case for more direct action isn't just an altruistic one. And if direct aid is too unpopular there are other interesting ideas around; the economist Dean Baker, for instance, has proposed that delinquent homeowners lose all the equity in their homes but be allowed to stay in them and pay rent instead. It seems more likely, though, that we'll just keep muddling through with the current approach, which offers us the sense that we can get quite a lot without spending much. Maybe it'll work. But the housing bubble was very expensive. It'll be surprising if we can deal with its consequences on the cheap.

—*James Surowiecki*

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POLITICS AND PROSE

THE COURTHOUSE RING

Atticus Finch and the limits of Southern liberalism.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

In 1954, when James (Big Jim) Folsom was running for a second term as governor of Alabama, he drove to Clayton, in Barbour County, to meet a powerful local probate judge. This was in the heart of the Deep South, at a time when Jim Crow was in full effect. In Barbour County, the races did not mix, and white men were expected to uphold the privileges of their gender and color. But when his car pulled up to the curb, where the judge was waiting, Folsom spotted two black men on the sidewalk. He jumped out, shook their hands heartily, and only then turned to the stunned judge. "All men are just alike," Folsom liked to say.

Big Jim Folsom was six feet eight inches tall, and had the looks of a movie star. He was a prodigious drinker, and a brilliant campaigner, who travelled around the state with a hillbilly string band called the Strawberry Pickers. The press referred to him (not always affectionately) as Kissin' Jim, for his habit of grabbing the prettiest woman at hand. Folsom was far and away the dominant figure in postwar Alabama politics—and he was a prime example of that now rare species of progressive Southern populist.

Folsom would end his speeches by brandishing a corn-shuck mop and promising a spring cleaning of the state capitol. He was against the Big Mules, as the entrenched corporate interests were known. He worked to extend the vote to disenfranchised blacks. He wanted to equalize salaries between white and black schoolteachers. He routinely commuted the death sentences of blacks convicted in what he believed were less than fair trials. He made no attempt to segregate the crowd at his inaugural address. "Ya'll come," he would say to one and all, making a proud and lonely stand for racial justice.

Big Jim Folsom left office in 1959. The next year, a young Southern woman published a novel set in mid-century Alabama about one man's proud and lonely stand for racial justice. The woman was Harper Lee and the novel was "To Kill a Mockingbird," and one way to make sense of Lee's classic—and of a controversy that is swirling around the book on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary—is to start with Big Jim Folsom.

The Alabama of Folsom—and Lee—was marked by a profound localism. Political scientists call it the "friends and neighbors" effect. "Alabama voters rarely identified with candidates on the basis of issues," George Sims writes in his biography of Folsom, "The Little Man's Best Friend." "Instead, they tended to give greatest support to the candidate whose home was nearest their own." Alabama was made up of "island communities," each dominated by a small clique of power brokers, known as a "courthouse ring." There were no Republicans to speak of in the Alabama of that era, only Democrats. Politics was not ideological. It was personal. What it meant to be a racial moderate, in that context, was to push for an informal accommodation between black and white.

"Big Jim did not seek a fundamental shift of political power or a revolution in social mores," Sims says. Folsom operated out of a sense of noblesse oblige: privileged whites, he believed, ought to "adopt a more humanitarian attitude" toward blacks. When the black Harlem congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., came to Montgomery, on a voter-registration drive, Folsom invited him to the Governor's Mansion for a Scotch-and-soda. That was simply good manners. Whenever he was accused of being too friendly to black people, Folsom shrugged. His assumption was that Negroes were citizens, just like anyone else. "I just never did get all excited about our colored brothers," he once said. "We have had them here for three hundred years and we will have them for another three hundred years."

Folsom was not a civil-rights activist. Activists were interested in using the full, impersonal force of the law to compel equality. In fact, the Supreme Court's landmark desegregation ruling in Brown v. Board of Education ended Folsom's career, because the racial backlash that it created drove moderates off the political stage. The historian Michael Klarman writes, "Virtually no southern politician could survive in this political environment without toeing the massive resistance line, and in most states politicians competed to occupy the most extreme position on the racial spectrum." Folsom lost his job to the segregationist John Patterson, who then gave way to the radical George Wallace. In Birmingham, which was quietly liberalizing through the early nineteen-fifties, Bull Connor (who notoriously set police dogs on civil-rights marchers in the nineteen-sixties) had been in political exile. It was the Brown decision that brought him back. Old-style Southern liberalism—gradual and paternalistic—crumbled in the face of liberalism in the form of an urgent demand for formal equality. Activism proved incompatible with Folsomism.

On what side was Harper Lee's Atticus Finch? Finch defended Tom Robinson, the black man falsely accused of what in nineteen-thirties Alabama was the gravest of sins, the rape of a white woman. In the years since, he has become a role model for the legal profession. But he's much closer to Folsom's side of the race question than he is to the civil-rights activists who were arriving in the South as Lee wrote her novel.

Think about the scene that serves as the book's centerpiece. Finch is at the front of the courtroom with Robinson. The jury files in. In the balcony, the book's narrator—Finch's daughter, Jean Louise, or Scout, as she's known—shuts her eyes. "Guilty," the first of the jurors says. "Guilty," the second says, and down the line: "guilty, guilty, guilty." Finch gathers his papers into his briefcase. He says a quiet word to his client, gathers his coat off the back of his chair, and walks, head bowed, out of the courtroom.

"Someone was punching me, but I was reluctant to take my eyes from the people below us, and from the image of Atticus's lonely walk down the aisle," Scout relates, in one of American literature's most moving passages:

> "Miss Jean Louise?"
>
> I looked around. They were standing. All around us and in the balcony on the opposite wall, the Negroes were getting to their feet. Reverend Sykes's voice was as distant as Judge Taylor's:
>
> "Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'."

If Finch were a civil-rights hero, he would be brimming with rage at the unjust verdict. But he isn't. He's not Thurgood Marshall looking for racial salvation through the law. He's Jim Folsom,

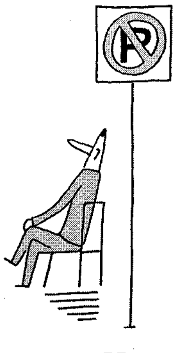
In "To Kill a Mockingbird," Finch (played by Gregory Peck in the 1962 film version) sought to humanize Jim Crow, not challenge it.

UNIVERSAL PICTURES/PHOTOFEST

looking for racial salvation through hearts and minds.

"If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks," Finch tells his daughter. "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." He is never anything but gracious to his neighbor Mrs. Dubose, even though she considers him a "nigger-lover." He forgives the townsfolk of Maycomb for the same reason. They are suffering from a "sickness," he tells Scout—the inability to see a black man as a real person. All men, he believes, are just alike.

Here is where the criticism of Finch begins, because the hearts-and-minds approach is about accommodation, not reform. At one point, Scout asks him if it is O.K. to hate Hitler. Finch answers, firmly, that it is not O.K. to hate anyone. Really? Not even Hitler? When his children bring up the subject of the Ku Klux Klan's presence in Maycomb, he shrugs: "Way back about nineteen-twenty there was a Klan, but it was a political organization more than anything. Besides, they couldn't find anyone to scare. They paraded by Mr. Sam Levy's house one night, but Sam just stood on his porch and told 'em things had come to a pretty pass.... Sam made 'em so ashamed of themselves they went away." Someone in Finch's historical position would surely have been aware of the lynching of Leo Frank in Marietta, Georgia, in 1915. Frank was convicted, on dubious evidence, of murdering a thirteen-year-old girl, Mary Phagan. The prosecutor in the case compared Frank to Judas Iscariot, and the crowd outside the courthouse shouted, "Hang the Jew!" Anti-Semitism of the most virulent kind was embedded in the social fabric of the Old South. But Finch does not want to deal with the existence of anti-Semitism. He wants to believe in the fantasy of Sam Levy, down the street, giving the Klan a good scolding.



In the middle of the novel, after Tom Robinson's arrest, Finch spends the night in front of the Maycomb jail, concerned that a mob might come down and try to take matters into its own hands. Sure enough, one does, led by a poor white farmer, Walter Cunningham. The mob eventually scatters, and the next morning Finch tries to explain the night's events to Scout. Here again is a test for Finch's high-minded equanimity. He likes Walter Cunningham. Cunningham is, to his mind, the right sort of poor white farmer: a man who refuses a W.P.A. handout and who scrupulously repays Finch for legal work with a load of stove wood, a sack of hickory nuts, and a crate of smilax and holly. Against this, Finch must weigh the fact that Cunningham also leads lynch mobs against black people. So what does he do? Once again, he puts personal ties first. Cunningham, Finch tells his daughter, is "basically a good man," who "just has his blind spots along with the rest of us." Blind spots? As the legal scholar Monroe Freedman has written, "It just happens that Cunningham's blind spot (along with the rest of us?) is a homicidal hatred of black people."

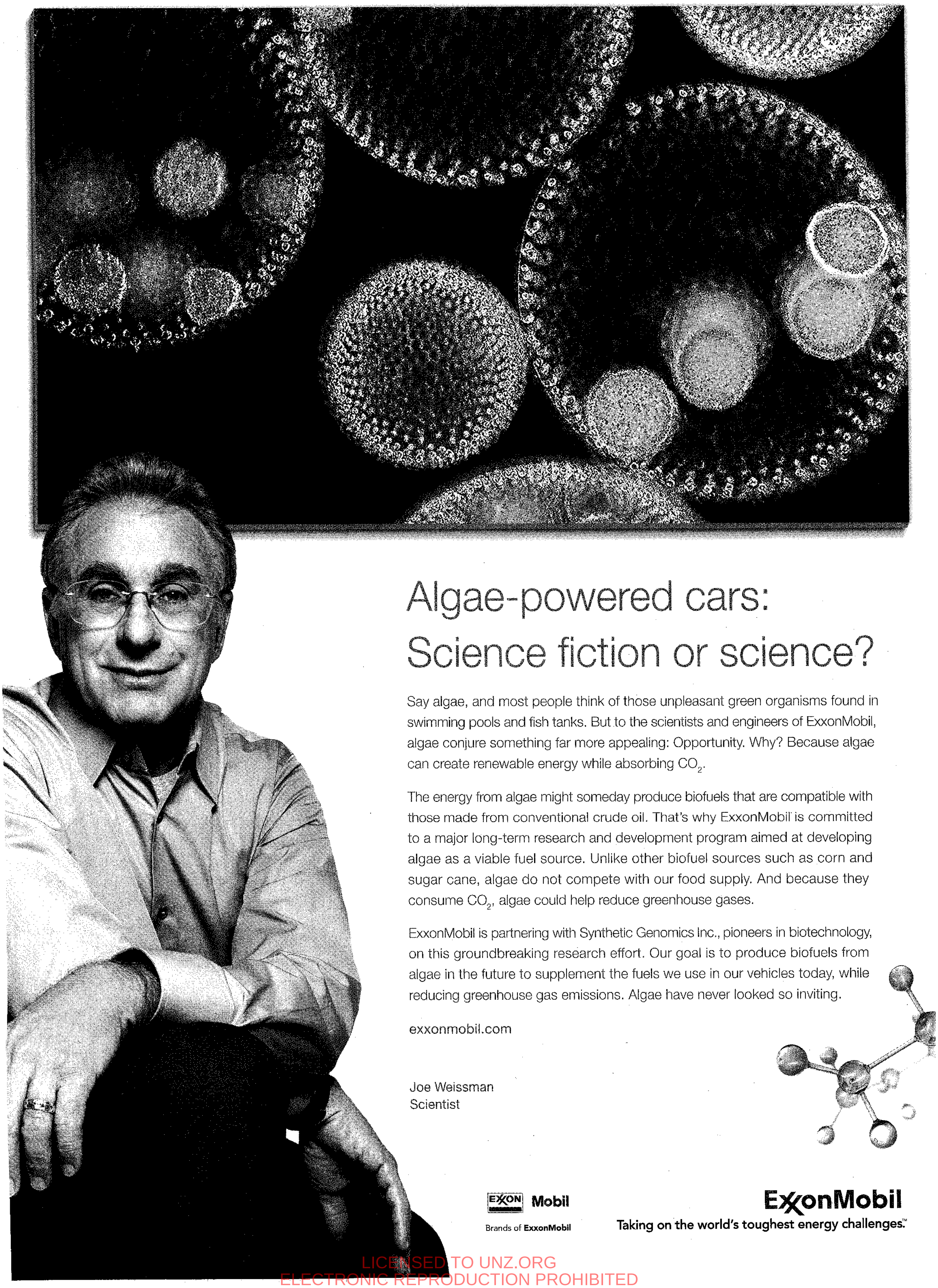
Finch will stand up to racists. He'll use his moral authority to shame them into silence. He will leave the judge standing on the sidewalk while he shakes hands with Negroes. What he will not do is look at the problem of racism outside the immediate context of Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Levy, and the island community of Maycomb, Alabama.

Folsom was the same way. He knew the frailties of his fellow-Alabamians when it came to race. But he could not grasp that those frailties were more than personal—that racism had a structural dimension. After he was elected governor a second time, in 1955, Folsom organized the first inaugural ball for blacks in Alabama's history. That's a very nice gesture. Yet it doesn't undermine segregation to give Negroes their own party. It makes it more palatable. Folsom's focus on the personal was also the reason that he was blindsided by Brown. He simply didn't have an answer to the Court's blunt and principled conclusion that separate was not equal. For a long time, Folsom simply ducked questions about integration. When he could no longer duck, he wriggled. And the wriggling wasn't attractive. Sims writes:

> In the spring of 1955, he repeated portions of his campaign program that touched the issue of desegregation tangentially and claimed that he had already made his position "plain, simple, and clear." He frequently repeated his pledge that he would not force black children to go to school with white children. It was an ambiguous promise that sounded like the words of a segregationist without specifically opposing segregation. Speaking to the Alabama Education Association in 1955, the governor recommended a school construction bond issue and implied that the money would help prolong segregation by improving the physical facilities of Negro schools.

One of Atticus Finch's strongest critics has been the legal scholar Steven Lubet, and Lubet's arguments are a good example of how badly the brand of Southern populism Finch represents has aged over the past fifty years. Lubet's focus is the main event of "To Kill a Mockingbird"—Finch's defense of Tom Robinson. In "Reconstructing Atticus Finch," in the *Michigan Law Review*, Lubet points out that Finch does not have a strong case. The putative rape victim, Mayella Ewell, has bruises on her face, and the supporting testimony of her father, Robert E. Lee Ewell. Robinson concedes that he was inside the Ewell house, and that some kind of sexual activity took place. The only potentially exculpatory evidence Finch can come up with is that Mayella's bruises are on the right side of her face while Robinson's left arm, owing to a childhood injury, is useless. Finch presents this fact with great fanfare. But, as Lubet argues, it's not exactly clear why a strong right-handed man can't hit a much smaller woman on the right side of her face. Couldn't she have turned her head? Couldn't he have hit her with a backhanded motion? Given the situation, Finch designs his defense, Lubet says, "to exploit a virtual catalog of misconceptions and fallacies about rape, each one calculated to heighten mistrust of the female complainant."

Here is the crucial moment of Robinson's testimony. Under Finch's patient prodding, he has described how he was walking by the Ewell property when Mayella asked him to come inside, to help her dismantle a piece of furniture. The house, usually crowded with Mayella's numerous sisters and brothers, was empty. "I say where the chillun?" Robinson testifies, "an' she says—she was laughin', sort of—she says they all gone to town to get ice creams. She says, 'Took me a slap year to save seb'm nickels, but I done it. They all gone to town.'" She then asked him to stand on a chair and



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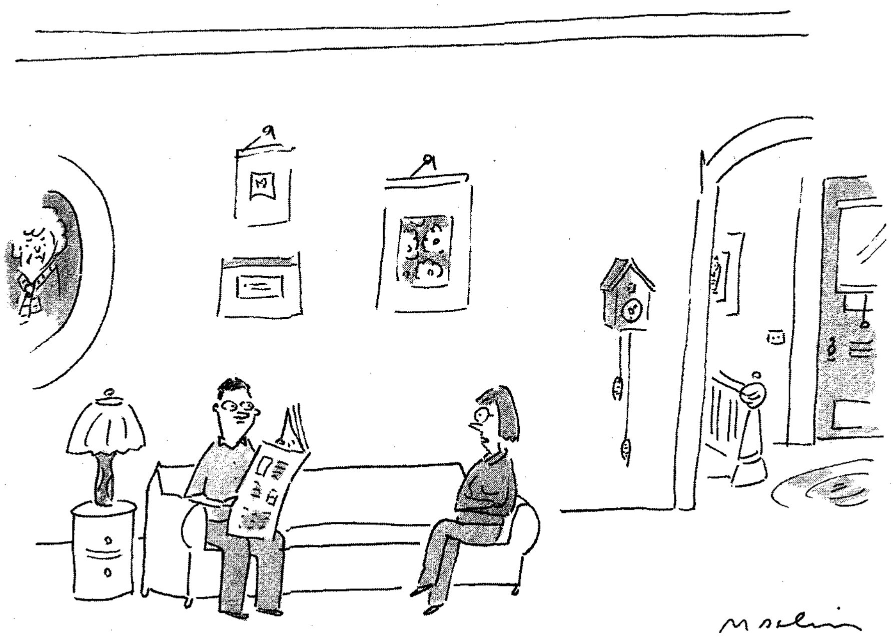


"Sometimes I wonder what life would be like with you."

• •

get a box down from the chifforobe. She "hugged him" around the waist. Robinson goes on:

> "She reached up an' kissed me 'side of th' face. She says she never kissed a grown man before an' she might as well kiss a nigger. She says what her papa do to her don't count. She says, 'Kiss me back nigger.' I say Miss Mayella lemme outa here an' tried to run but she got her back to the door an' I'da had to push her. I didn't wanta harm her, Mr. Finch, an' I say lemme pass, but just when I say it Mr. Ewell yonder hollered through th' window."
>
> "What did he say?"
>
> . . . Tom Robinson shut his eyes tight. "He says you goddam whore, I'll kill ya."

Mayella plotted for a year, saving her pennies so she could clear the house of her siblings. Then she lay in wait for Robinson, in the fervent hope that he would come by that morning. "She knew full well the enormity of her offense," Finch tells the jury, in his summation, "but because her desires were stronger than the code she was breaking, she persisted in breaking it." For a woman to be portrayed as a sexual aggressor in the Jim Crow South was a devastating charge. Lubet writes:

> The "she wanted it" defense in this case was particularly harsh. Here is what it said about Mayella: She was so starved for sex that she spent an entire year scheming for a way to make it happen. She was desperate for a man, any man. She repeatedly grabbed at Tom and wouldn't let him go, barring the door when he respectfully tried to disentangle himself. And in case Mayella had any dignity left after all that, it had to be insinuated that she had sex with her father.

It is useful, once again, to consider Finch's conduct in the light of the historical South of his time. The scholar Lisa Lindquist Dorr has examined two hundred and eighty-eight cases of black-on-white rape that occurred in Virginia between 1900 and 1960. Seventeen of the accused were killed through "extra legal violence"—that is to say, lynched. Fifty were executed. Forty-eight were given the maximum sentence. Fifty-two were sentenced to prison terms of five years or less, on charges ranging from rape and murder to robbery, assault and battery, or "annoying a white woman." Thirty-five either were acquitted or had their charges dismissed. A not inconsiderable number had their sentences commuted by the governor.

Justice was administered unequally in the South: Dorr points out that of the dozens of rapists in Virginia who were sentenced to death between 1908 and 1963 (Virginia being one of the few states where both rape and attempted rape were capital crimes) *none* were white. Nonetheless, those statistics suggest that race was not always the overriding consideration in rape trials. "White men did not always automatically leap to the defense of white women," Dorr writes. "Some white men reluctantly sided with black men against white women whose class or sexual history they found suspect. Sometimes whites trusted the word of black men whose families they had known for generations over the sworn testimony of white women whose backgrounds were unknown or (even worse) known and despised. White women retained their status as innocent victim only as long as they followed the dictates of middle-class morality."

One of Dorr's examples is John Mays, Jr., a black juvenile sentenced in 1923 to an eighteen-year prison term for the attempted rape of a white girl. His employer, A. A. Sizer, petitioned the Virginia governor for clemency, arguing that Mays, who was religious and educated, "comes of our best negro stock." His victim, meanwhile, "comes from our lowest breed of poor whites. . . . Her mother is utterly immoral and without principle; and this child has been accustomed from her very babyhood to behold scenes of the grossest immorality. None of our welfare work affects her, she is brazenly immoral."

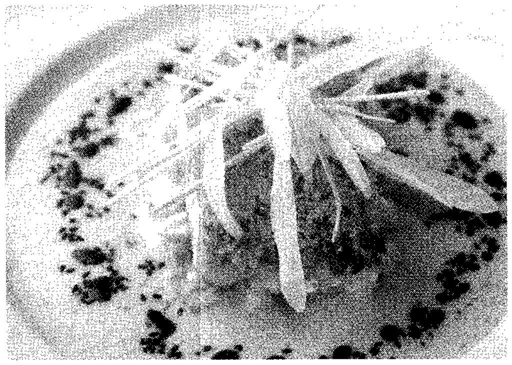
The reference to the mother was important. "Though Sizer did not directly impugn the victim herself, direct evidence was unnecessary during the heyday of eugenic family studies," Dorr writes. "The victim, coming from the same inferior 'stock,' would likely share her mother's moral character." The argument worked: Mays was released from prison in 1930.

This is essentially the defense that Atticus Finch fashions for his client. Robinson is the churchgoer, the "good Negro." Mayella, by contrast, comes from the town's lowest breed of poor whites. "Every town the size of Maycomb had families like the Ewells," Scout tells us. "No truant officers could keep their numerous offspring in school; no public health officer could free them from congenital defects, various worms, and the diseases indigenous to filthy surroundings." They live in a shack behind the town dump, with windows that "were merely open spaces in the walls, which in the summertime were covered with greasy strips of cheesecloth to keep out the varmints that feasted on Maycomb's refuse." Bob Ewell is described as a "little bantam cock of a man" with a face as red as his neck, so unaccustomed to polite

Stories of HAWAIʻI

Island Flavor.

Renowned chef Alan Wong is a master of Hawaiʻi Regional Cuisine and has made a career out of borrowing Island ethnic influences to create local dishes with a contemporary spin.



LEANING OVER STEAMING CUPS of rich, dark coffee, Alan Wong intentionally slurps the full-bodied elixir to savor the aroma of beans grown on the volcanic slopes of southern Hawaiʻi's Pāhala town, once a center of flourishing sugar plantations.

Wong, Hawaiʻi's award-winning chef, hunts constantly for the best new Island flavors. He orders ten pounds of "Bull" Kailiawa's beans on the spot, installing his latest find on the elaborate coffee menu at his eponymous Honolulu restaurant on South King Street, a culinary shrine to Hawaiʻi Regional Cuisine and an establishment that repeatedly ranks among the country's top fifty.

"I want guests to have the experience," Wong says, "of *tasting* Hawaiʻi."

Consider "Loco Moco," Hawaiʻi's stick-to-the-ribs popular meal of rice, hamburger, fried eggs, and onions, smothered in brown gravy. Under Wong's touch it becomes a baked tureen of *unagi* (eel), short ribs, rice, and foie gras, sliced and lightly sautéed in a special grated *mochi* (rice cake) coating, and topped with a quail egg, sunny-side up.

Or there's a whole tomato salad with a vinaigrette dressing flavored with *li hing mui*, a salty dried plum, and ginger-crusted *onaga* (longtail snapper). Or an *ʻopihi*-shooters appetizer, which features limpets plucked from rocky Hawaiian shores. They're bathed in a clear, spicy tomato water boasting an infusion of fennel, garlic, basil, chili, and olives, and complemented by the Japanese condiments *ume, chiso,* and *wasabi*, all strained through a coffee filter. Wong's menus cull local delights like lychee, mango, Big Island beef and goat cheese, *ʻōpakapaka* or crimson red snapper from Hawaiian waters, and delicate *moi*, once the fish of royalty, now farmed to perfection.

"I take local food, local flavors, local ingredients, and reinterpret them," says the man who was a picky eater as a child. Indeed, he hated vegetables so much that he hid creamed spinach in his pocket to avoid detection by school cafeteria monitors.

"My definition of Hawaiʻi cuisine borrows from all the ethnic influences you find in Hawaiʻi," says Wong. "Chinese, Portuguese, Puerto Rican, Japanese, Korean, Okinawan, Philippine, and Hawaiian. Hawaiʻi was born out of an agricultural past, the plantations, and the immigrants who came to work those fields."

Along with language and culture, laborers brought their food. It was the food of the earth—*terroir* in the days of soul food. This is the cuisine Wong celebrates.

Though he worked his way up in the restaurant business from dishwasher to manager, learning to carve ice sculptures for banquets long before he could flip an egg, Wong has become one of the prominent chefs who made Hawaiʻi Regional Cuisine an established movement. Today he is a foremost originator of dishes that have their origins in the state's varied immigrant history.

This summer, at the invitation of Hawaiʻi-born president, Barack Obama, Wong supervised a White House lūʻau featuring such Hawaiʻi-grown specialties as Hāmākua Honshimeji mushrooms and dark Waialua chocolate.

"You use what you have," he says, "and put your love into it."

—Beverly Creamer

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: WONG PORTRAIT AND GINGER-CRUSTED ONAGA INSET © RAE HUO; PRODUCE AND STRAWBERRY ROMANOFF PHOTOS © ALAN WONG

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society that cleaning up for the trial leaves him with a "scalded look; as if an overnight soaking had deprived him of protective layers of dirt." His daughter, the complainant, is a "thick-bodied girl accustomed to strenuous labor." The Ewells are trash. When the defense insinuates that Mayella is the victim of incest at the hands of her father, it is not to make her a sympathetic figure. It is, in the eugenicist spirit of the times, to impugn her credibility—to do what A. A. Sizer did in the John Mays case: *The victim, coming from the same inferior stock, would likely share her father's moral character.* "I won't try to scare you for a while," Finch says, when he begins his cross-examination of Mayella. Then he adds, with polite menace, "Not yet."

We are back in the embrace of Folsomism. Finch wants his white, male jurors to do the right thing. But as a good Jim Crow liberal he dare not challenge the foundations of their privilege. Instead, Finch does what lawyers for black men did in those days. He encourages them to swap one of their prejudices for another.

One of George Orwell's finest essays takes Charles Dickens to task for his lack of "constructive suggestions." Dickens was a powerful critic of Victorian England, a proud and lonely voice in the campaign for social reform. But, as Orwell points out, there was little substance to Dickens's complaints. "He attacks the law, parliamentary government, the educational system and so forth, without ever clearly suggesting what he would put in their places," Orwell writes. "There is no clear sign that he wants the existing order to be overthrown, or that he believes it would make very much difference if it were overthrown. For in reality his target is not so much society as 'human nature.'" Dickens sought "a change of spirit rather than a change in structure."

Orwell didn't think that Dickens should have written different novels; he loved Dickens. But he understood that Dickens bore the ideological marks of his time and place. His class did not see the English social order as tyrannical, worthy of being overthrown. Dickens thought that large contradictions could be tamed through small moments of justice. He believed in the power of changing hearts, and that's what you believe in, Orwell says, if you "do not wish to endanger the status quo."

But in cases where the status quo involves systemic injustice this is no more than a temporary strategy. Eventually, such injustice requires more than a change of heart. "What in the world am I ever going to do with the Niggers?" Jim Folsom once muttered, when the backlash against Brown began to engulf his political career. The argument over race had risen to such a pitch that it could no longer be alleviated by gesture and symbolism—by separate but equal inaugural balls and hearty handshakes—and he was lost.

Finch's moral test comes at the end of "To Kill a Mockingbird." Bob Ewell has been humiliated by the Robinson trial. In revenge, he attacks Scout and her brother on Halloween night. Boo Radley, the reclusive neighbor of the Finches, comes to the children's defense, and in the scuffle Radley kills Ewell. Sheriff Tate brings the news to Finch, and persuades him to lie about what actually happened; the story will be that Ewell inadvertently stabbed himself in the scuffle. As the Sheriff explains:

> Maybe you'll say it's my duty to tell the town all about it and not hush it up. Know what'd happen then? All the ladies in Maycomb includin' my wife'd be knocking on his door bringing angel food cakes. To my way of thinkin', Mr. Finch, taking the one man who's done you and this town a great service an' draggin' him with his shy ways into the limelight—to me, that's a sin. It's a sin and I'm not about to have it on my head. If it was any other man it'd be different. But not this man, Mr. Finch.

The courthouse ring had spoken. Maycomb would go back to the way it had always been.

"Scout," Finch says to his daughter, after he and Sheriff Tate have cut their little side deal. "Mr. Ewell fell on his knife. Can you possibly understand?"

Understand what? That her father and the Sheriff have decided to obstruct justice in the name of saving their beloved neighbor the burden of angel-food cake? Atticus Finch is faced with jurors who have one set of standards for white people like the Ewells and another set for black folk like Tom Robinson. His response is to adopt one set of standards for respectable whites like Boo Radley and another for white trash like Bob Ewell. A book that we thought instructed us about the world tells us, instead, about the limitations of Jim Crow liberalism in Maycomb, Alabama. ♦

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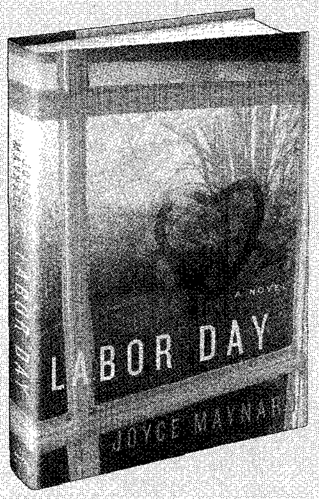

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A GUIDE TO SUMMER SUN PROTECTION

BY ZEV BOROW

> SPF creep has hit the triple digits with Neutrogena's SPF 100+ sunblock, leading some dermatologists to complain that this is merely a numbers game that confuses consumers.
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> —*The Times.*

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SPF 100—This is to SPF 99 and below as excellent heroin is to Capri Sun juice boxes. If you haven't already, ask yourself: Are you gonna run with the big dogs? Or stay on the porch with the pups?

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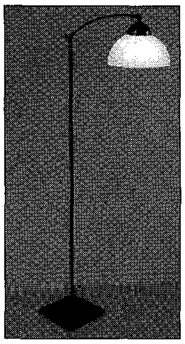

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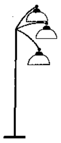

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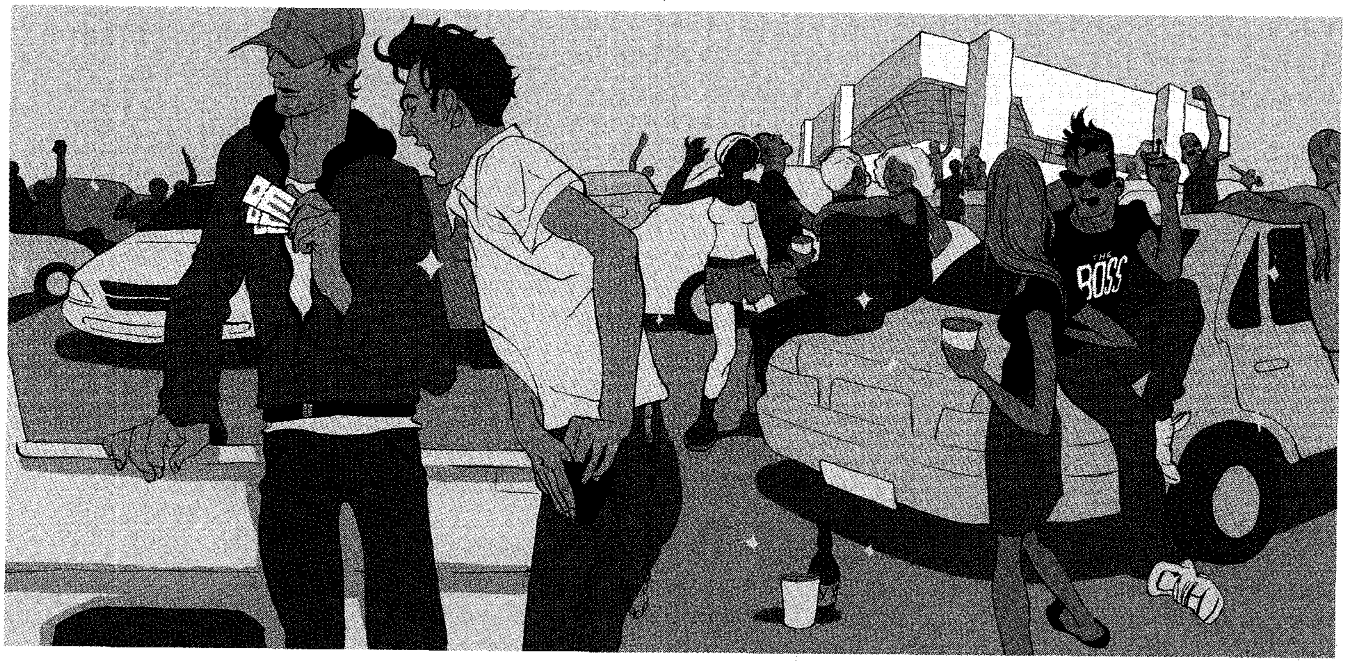
ANNALS OF ENTERTAINMENT

THE PRICE OF THE TICKET

What does it take to get to see your favorite band?

BY JOHN SEABROOK



Bruce Springsteen, in underpricing tickets to his shows, inadvertently helped to create an orgy of speculation and scalping.

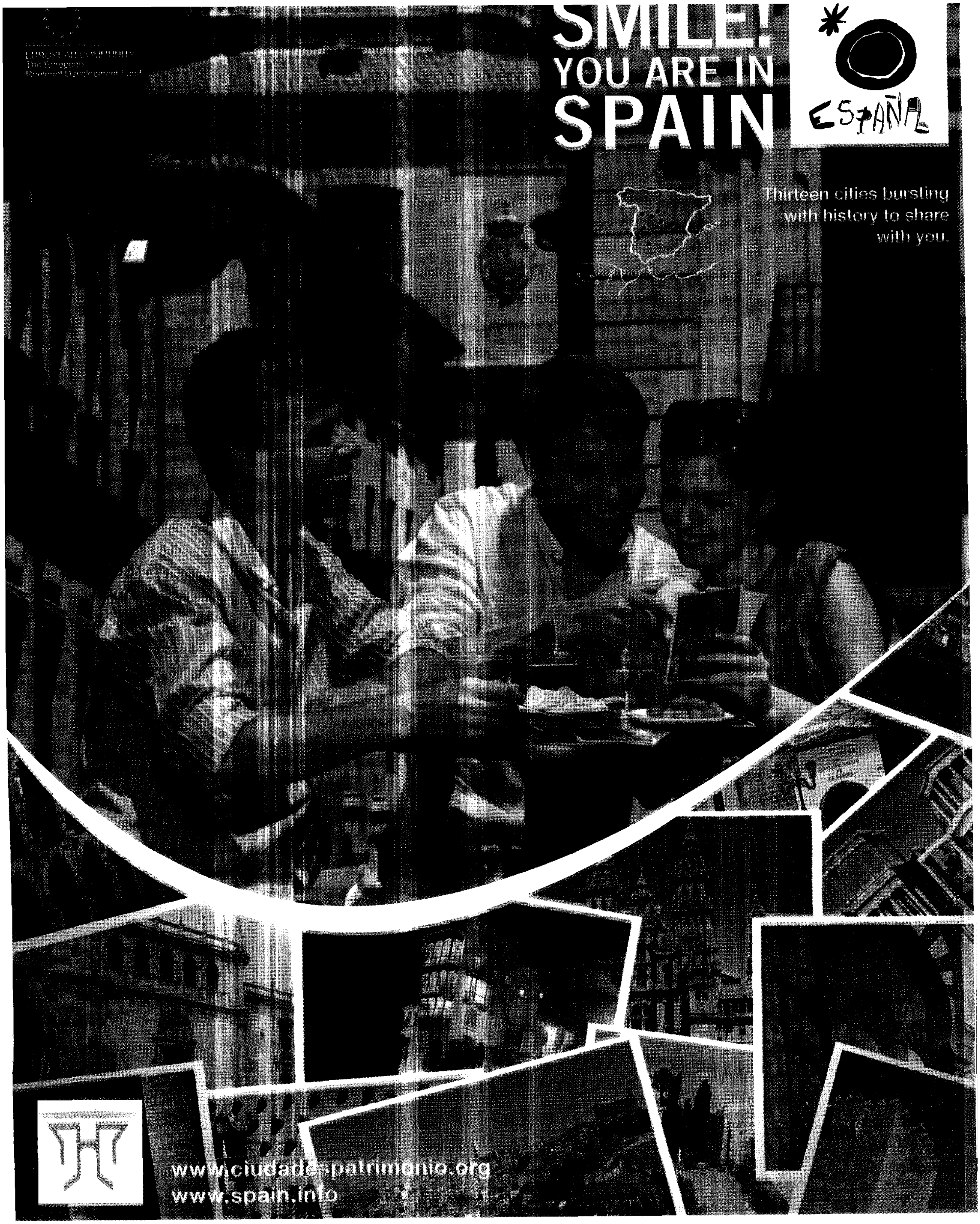
TOMER HANUKA

The rock-concert business began on the evening of November 6, 1965, outside a loft building on Howard Street in San Francisco. Bill Graham, a thirty-four-year-old frustrated actor from the Bronx, had organized an "appeal" for the Mime Troupe, a radical theatre group he managed, whose leader, Ronnie Davis, had recently been busted for public obscenity. Graham was more hustler than hippie, but he understood the kids, and he had arranged for several local rock bands, including Jefferson Airplane and the Fugs, to perform at the benefit. Arriving on a motor scooter with Robert Scheer, the managing editor of the magazine *Ramparts*, Graham saw a long line stretching down Howard Street—"Huge hordes of people," as he recalled in his autobiography, "Bill Graham Presents," written with Robert Greenfield. Turning to Scheer, he said, "*This* is the business of the future."

There had, of course, been rock-and-roll concerts before the Mime Troupe appeal; the Beatles had filled Shea Stadium a few months earlier. But that was show business as usual, staged for teenyboppers, who screamed so loudly that the musicians couldn't hear themselves play. The kids who lined up on Howard Street were there for the *experience*. Drugs helped, but, as history would show, it wasn't only drugs that made a great rock show a transformative event. It was the music, the artist, and the community of fans—instant cousinship, as Graham called it—together with the sudden blaze of lights, the press of sweaty flesh, and a thousand fists punching the air as the chorus rolled around. Inside the loft, Graham recalled, "I saw people come in and instantly start dancing with other people and only then did I realize that they didn't know each other. They just started dancing. I'd never seen that before."

This year, Live Nation, the world's largest concert promoter, will attempt to re-create the spirit of that Howard Street happening at some twenty-two hundred concerts, performed by sixteen hundred acts, in thirty-three countries around the world. Last year, Ticketmaster Entertainment, the world's largest ticket seller, sold more than a hundred and forty-one million tickets, valued at more than $8.9 billion. With the collapse of the record business, as a result of piracy (album sales are almost half what they were in 2000, and, according to some surveys, ninety-five per cent of all downloaded music is stolen), the business of selling live music has become the main source of revenue for the popular-music industry. That means the work of developing acts, spreading the word, and supporting tours—all of which used to be done by record labels and radio (back in the days when the big rock stations played new music)—now has to be done by Live Nation and Ticketmaster, whether they want to do it or not.

Almost everyone agrees that the business of live music—the live experience, as Live Nation calls its product—is dysfunctional. Both Live Nation and Ticketmaster are loathed by fans, and their stock prices are depressed. Concertgoers complain about the "convenience charges" as well as parking and facility fees that Ticketmaster tacks on, which can account for more than thirty per cent of the cost of a ticket. Promoters worry that, as the top-grossing touring acts—the Rolling Stones, the Eagles, Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen, U2, Madonna—get older, very few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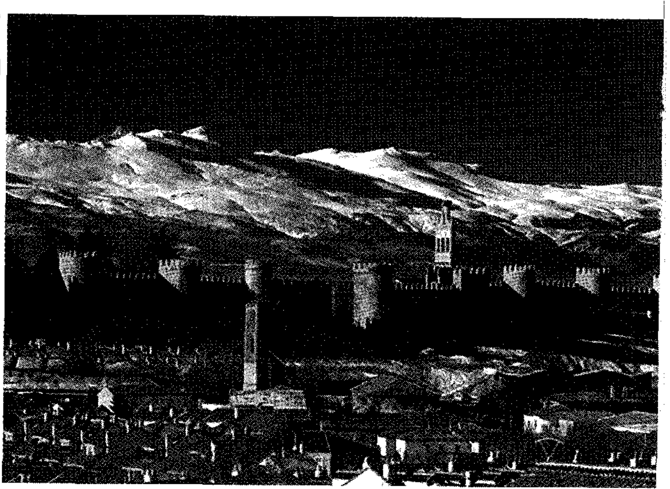


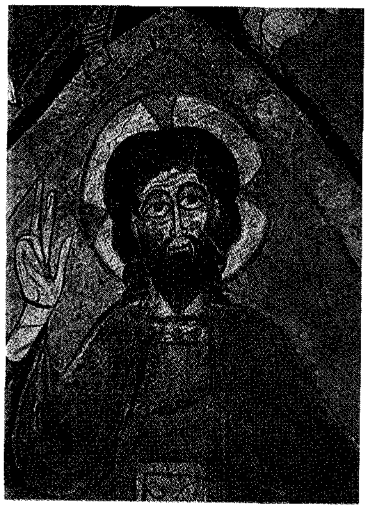
World Heritage Cities

A catalog of the cultural riches of Spain would fill libraries (or terabytes). The **Iberian Peninsula** has served as the crossroads of civilizations for millennia. Now thirteen Spanish cities—all designated UNESCO World Heritage sites—have joined together as the *Ciudades Patrimonio de la Humanidad de España* to offer visitors an experience of historic dimensions.

Only eighteen miles from Madrid, **Alcalá de Henares** was the birthplace of Cervantes, whose house (now the Cervantes House-Museum) serves as an example of the typical sixteenth-century Castilian home.

Ávila's City Wall is considered among the best-conserved Medieval stone walls in Europe. The sixty-one-room Parador of Ávila is a former palace dating from the sixteenth century.

Cáceres earned Spain's first Heritage City designation, with one of the largest concentrations of historic buildings in the country. Linger after dark to experience the brilliantly illuminated old town and its monuments from all ages.



Córdoba was the western capital of the Islamic empire during the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is home to one of the Caliphate's most spectacular works of art: the Great Mosque, with its soaring arches and more than 850 columns.

Perched precariously on a steep ridge with deep gorges on either side, the city of **Cuenca** has been described as "suspended in mid air." The town's remarkable *casas colgadas* or hanging houses can be admired up close from the Parador of Cuenca, a sixteenth-century former convent.

An island of rich biodiversity in the Mediterranean, **Ibiza** combines scenery with scene, offering glamorous resorts and lively nightlife. **Mérida** contains a magnificent Roman theatre and the Amphitheatre, making its archaeological site one of the country's best preserved.

Salamanca is known for its artistic richness including two cathedrals, the beautiful Plaza Mayor built in baroque style and the renowned University dating from the thirteenth century.

San Cristóbal de la Laguna, founded in 1497 in the northern part of Tenerife (one of the Canary Islands), provided the urban planning model for many colonial towns in the Americas.

Long a pilgrimage destination, **Santiago de Compostela**, near Spain's northwestern tip, was considered one of the three holy cities of Christendom. The remains of the Apostle St. James are said to repose inside the cathedral.

Segovia rests on a rock dividing the Eresma and Clamores rivers. Its Roman aqueduct was built in the first century out of blocks of perfectly balanced stone held together without mortar. On the shores of the Mediterranean, the old Roman city of **Tarragona** offers a monumental legacy.

Toledo has been called "quintessential Spain": a melting pot of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish cultures that have lived together in harmony for centuries. That could be a larger lesson for the world today, or just one more compelling reason to experience the treasures of *Ciudades **Patrimonio** de la Humanidad de España* for yourself.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: CUENCA'S CASAS COLGADAS AT NIGHT; ÁVILA VISTA; SEGOVIA IGLESIA DE SAN JUSTO. ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF CIUDADES PATRIMONIO DE LA HUMANIDAD DE ESPAÑA AND TURESPAÑA

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younger acts are popular enough to fill stadiums and arenas on the two-year-long tours that superstar rock bands undertake. (Forty per cent of the seats at all Live Nation concerts go unsold.) Most galling to the four stakeholders involved in putting on a concert—the artist, the promoter, the venue operator, and the ticket seller—is the loss of billions of dollars in revenue to the "secondary market": the Internet-driven business of ticket reselling, in which ticket brokers and scalpers profit, while the people who take the artistic and financial risks hardly participate at all.

Bill Graham did not live to see "the future" become the live experience; he died in a helicopter crash after a Huey Lewis and the News concert in Concord, California, in 1991. But if you go back to that night on Howard Street and try to understand what Graham saw, it seems obvious that the success of rock shows will always be measured not in box-office revenues and beer sales but in the quality of the party. Records are commodities; concerts are social events, and in trying to make a commodity out of the live experience you risk spoiling the experience altogether.

Two recent concerts—the shows that Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band performed at the Izod Center, in the New Jersey Meadowlands, on May 21st and May 23rd—have come to serve as a referendum on what's wrong with the live-music business. The shows marked the end of the first leg of Springsteen's "Working on a Dream" tour, which was announced in late January, after the release of his new album. In the flush days of the record business, bands toured to support the album; these days, the album is a teaser for the tour. (The Boss's new album, which has a list price of $18.98, has sold about five hundred and fifty thousand copies in the United States; last year's Springsteen tour grossed $204.5 million.) Ticketmaster handled the majority of the dates on the first U.S.-based leg of the tour, and tickets for most of the twenty-six shows went on sale on Monday, February 2nd—a day after Springsteen's half-time performance at the Super Bowl.

The Izod Center is a two-tiered arena with roughly twenty thousand seats, which is owned by the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, a public agency that was also the promoter for these two shows. (Live Nation promoted dates in other cities.) Some forty million people live within two and a half hours of the Izod Center, many of them Springsteen fans. The Boss could probably have sold out ten shows at the venue; because he had decided to do only two, desire for the tickets was guaranteed to be intense. With tickets in such short supply, market logic dictated high ticket prices. But Springsteen and his longtime manager, Jon Landau, had fixed prices at ninety-five dollars for lower-tier and general-admission standing-room floor tickets, and sixty-five dollars for upper-tier tickets. Given what Springsteen could have asked (the Stones charged four hundred and fifty dollars for the best seats on their most recent U.S. tour), these tickets were a remarkable bargain—proof, if anyone needed it, of Springsteen's solidarity with his working-class fans.

The phenomenon of below-market-value tickets has inspired a cottage industry of economists seeking to explain seemingly illogical pricing in the rock-concert business. Alan Krueger, a Princeton economist who, in May, was confirmed as the Treasury Department's assistant secretary for economic policy, is one. "There is still an element of rock concerts that is more like a party than a commodities market," Krueger told me. A ticket to a rock show, he said, bears elements of a "gift exchange," in which intangible benefits accrue to the seller. Cheap tickets increase the possibility of a sellout, which augments merchandise and concession sales. Sellouts make the concert experience better for musicians and audience alike. And, one might add, a cheap ticket is the price the music industry pays to preserve the illusion that the sixties never ended. "In some fashion, I help people hold on to their own humanity—if I'm doing my job right," Springsteen once said, of his performances. At least, he helps people hold on to their savings.

In a 2006 paper titled "Rockonomics: The Economics of Popular Music," written with Marie Connolly, Krueger reports on data that he and twelve Princeton students collected at a Springsteen concert in Philadelphia, on October 6, 2002. Every ticket cost seventy-five dollars, and the box-office amounted

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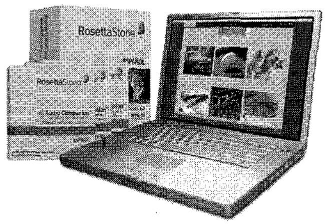

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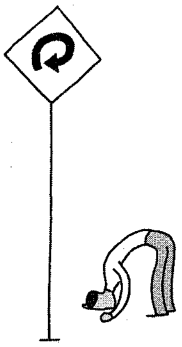
to around $1.5 million. Krueger and his researchers found that a quarter of the fans they interviewed before the show had bought their tickets on the secondary market, where they had paid an average of two hundred and eighty dollars. Had Springsteen charged the market price for all tickets, he would have collected about four million dollars in additional revenue, a figure Krueger calls “astounding.” Studying concert-ticket sales, Krueger also told me, is not all that different from analyzing mortgage-backed securities, which were at the heart of the financial crisis. Both are bought and then resold on a secondary market, and “both markets are also subject to price bubbles, lack of trust, inadequate regulation, and imperfect information.”



By drastically underpricing the Izod Center tickets, Springsteen was inadvertently helping to create the circumstances for an orgy of speculation and scalping on the secondary market. The desire for a hot ticket is not an economic calculation; it’s a craving. Thanks to the Internet, satisfaction is only a couple of mouse clicks away.

Ticket scalping is probably as old as tickets. (Ticket scholarship is a neglected field, but, in the English-speaking world, tickets are thought to have been invented in the Elizabethan era.) According to Kerry Segrave’s “Ticket Scalping: An American History, 1850-2005,” the term derives from the early days of railroads, when “scalpers” would sell partly used tickets at a discount. By the late nineteenth century, New Yorkers were applying the word to the crowds of “sidewalk men,” who sold tickets for inflated prices outside Broadway theatres, and who were a source of public outrage. “The greatest evil that theatergoers in this city have to contend with is the ticket speculator,” a local magistrate named Crane said in 1901. “They are practically highwaymen and hold up everybody that goes to a place of amusement.”

For more than a century, public officials have repeatedly introduced anti-scalping legislation; many such laws have been struck down as unconstitutional, on the reasonable ground that a ticket scalper is no different from an art dealer or a real-estate speculator. Sidewalk men were sometimes arrested on charges of disorderly conduct; eventually laws were put in place that prohibited scalping within a certain distance of a venue. But, as anyone who has been to a big game or a show at Madison Square Garden knows, such laws are rarely enforced.

Licensed ticket brokers are usually distinguished from scalpers, although they sometimes employ scalpers to unload their excess inventory on the street. But the Internet has blurred the distinction between pros and amateurs by making it possible for people like Amy Stephens, a thirty-three-year-old mother of three from Atlanta, to enter the profession. In the summer of 2001, Stephens and her husband came to New York with a pair of hundred-dollar tickets to see “The Producers.” Unable to use them, they put them on eBay, where they promptly sold at a four-hundred-dollar markup. Stephens bought more “Producers” tickets at the box office, and they sold for a profit, too. Back in Atlanta, she bought a twenty-game pack of Anaheim Angels tickets, which guaranteed the holder seats for playoff games, and when the Angels went to the World Series, Stephens sold those tickets for fifteen hundred dollars each. By 2005, Amy’s Tickets was grossing a million dollars a year. “I would never in a thousand years stand on the street and sell tickets,” Stephens told me. “But this was so easy.”

The Internet has made scalping as common as day trading. I heard of one college student who earned a hundred thousand dollars a year by scalping tickets on StubHub, the largest of the ticket-reselling sites, and TicketsNow, the second largest; both sites are online marketplaces that charge buyers and sellers a commission in return for guaranteeing transactions. We have become a republic of scalpers—even America’s team, the New York Yankees, has joined in. The Yankees used to confiscate season tickets from fans who’d scalped them, but now there’s a StubHub window at the new Stadium.

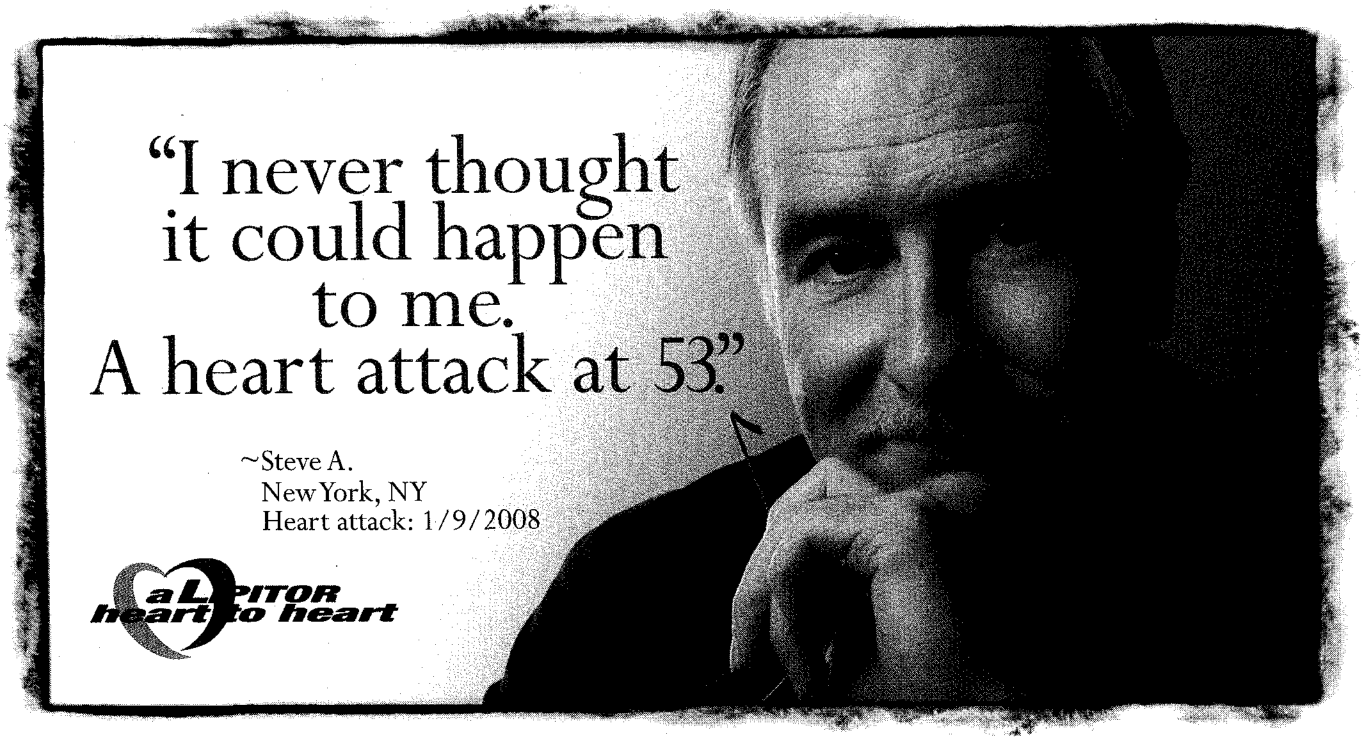
The rock-concert industry has not, by and large, been able to take advantage of this new market, because in some states ticket venders are legally bound to sell tickets for their face value, and because some of the twenty or so superstar touring acts that generate the majority of the income don’t want to charge market prices. In 2008, Ticketmaster expanded its reach within the secondary market by purchasing TicketsNow, but in doing so the company set itself up for a potential conflict of interest. There appeared to be a strong incentive for Ticketmaster to get tickets into the hands of brokers who operate on TicketsNow, and to reap hefty commissions.

On February 2nd, at a few minutes before 9 A.M., Maria Shwalb, a benefits manager for a large pharmaceutical company, was at her computer, waiting for the Izod Center shows to go on sale. Born and raised in northern New Jersey, the heartland of Springsteen Nation, Shwalb has seen close to fifty of Springsteen’s shows, going back almost thirty years. But she had never been really close up, and that was her dream—just once, to be right in front of the stage.

Not too long ago, Shwalb would have taken the day off and stood in line at the box office or at a nearby Ticketmaster outlet. More than once, she’d waited in line all night; even when she was pregnant with her second child she’d got in line at 6 A.M. The line was democratic, and self-policing, and it imposed its own kind of morality on the ticket market. The best seats went to the people who were willing to wait the longest, rather than to the people who would pay the most. Of course, ticket brokers sent “diggers”—generally teen-agers who were paid a set price for each ticket they dug up—but that was O.K. with Shwalb, because, she told me, “those guys had to wait in line, too, same as everyone else.”

But the spectacle of people camped for days around city blocks to get tickets to a hot show has disappeared, as ticket buying has migrated to the Internet. Ticketmaster doesn’t dedicate a certain number of tickets to each outlet—all tickets are pooled—so ticket buyers have a better chance in the online queue than in a physical one.

At precisely 9 A.M., Shwalb filled in the “captcha”—the distorted word puzzle designed to foil automated responses and



"I never thought it could happen to me. A heart attack at 53."

~Steve A.
New York, NY
Heart attack: 1/9/2008

a LIPITOR heart to heart

"I had been feeling fine. But turns out my cholesterol and other risk factors* increased my chance of a heart attack. Now I trust my heart to Lipitor. Talk to your doctor about your risk and about Lipitor."

- **Adding Lipitor may help, when diet and exercise are not enough. Unlike some other cholesterol-lowering medications, Lipitor is FDA-approved to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in patients with several common risk factors, including family history, high blood pressure, low good cholesterol, age and smoking.**
- **Lipitor has been extensively studied with over 16 years of research. And Lipitor is backed by 400 ongoing or completed clinical studies.**

*Patient's risk factors include age, gender, smoking, and high blood pressure.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: LIPITOR is a prescription drug. It is used in patients with multiple risk factors for heart disease such as family history, high blood pressure, age, low HDL ('good' cholesterol) or smoking to reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke and certain kinds of heart surgeries. When diet and exercise alone are not enough, LIPITOR is used along with a low-fat diet and exercise to lower cholesterol.

LIPITOR is not for everyone. It is not for those with liver problems. And it is not for women who are nursing, pregnant or may become pregnant. If you take LIPITOR, tell your doctor if you feel any new muscle pain or weakness. This could be a sign of rare but serious muscle side effects. Tell your doctor about all medications you take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor should do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment and may adjust your dose. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

LIPITOR is one of many cholesterol-lowering treatment options that you and your doctor can consider.

Please see additional important information on next page.

LIPITOR®
atorvastatin calcium
tablets

Have a heart to heart with your doctor about your risk. And about Lipitor.
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IMPORTANT FACTS

LIPITOR® atorvastatin calcium tablets (LIP-ih-tore)

LOWERING YOUR HIGH CHOLESTEROL

High cholesterol is more than just a number, it's a risk factor that should not be ignored. If your doctor said you have high cholesterol, you may be at an increased risk for heart attack. But the good news is, you can take steps to lower your cholesterol.

With the help of your doctor and a cholesterol-lowering medicine like LIPITOR, along with diet and exercise, you could be on your way to lowering your cholesterol.

Ready to start eating right and exercising more? Talk to your doctor and visit the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org.

WHO IS LIPITOR FOR?

Who can take LIPITOR:

- People who cannot lower their cholesterol enough with diet and exercise
- Adults and children over 10

Who should NOT take LIPITOR:

- Women who are pregnant, may be pregnant, or may become pregnant. LIPITOR may harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant, stop LIPITOR and call your doctor right away.
- Women who are breast-feeding. LIPITOR can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby.
- People with liver problems
- People allergic to anything in LIPITOR

BEFORE YOU START LIPITOR

Tell your doctor:

- About all medications you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements
- If you have muscle aches or weakness
- If you drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day
- If you have diabetes or kidney problems
- If you have a thyroid problem

ABOUT LIPITOR

LIPITOR is a prescription medicine. Along with diet and exercise, it lowers "bad" cholesterol in your blood. It can also raise "good" cholesterol (HDL-C).

LIPITOR can lower the risk of heart attack or stroke in patients who have risk factors for heart disease such as:

- age, smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL-C, heart disease in the family, *or*
- diabetes with risk factor such as eye problems, kidney problems, smoking, or high blood pressure

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LIPITOR

Serious side effects in a small number of people:

- **Muscle problems** that can lead to kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your chance for muscle problems is higher if you take certain other medicines with LIPITOR.
- **Liver problems**. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start LIPITOR and while you are taking it.

Symptoms of muscle or liver problems include:

- Unexplained muscle weakness or pain, especially if you have a fever or feel very tired
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain
- Brown or dark-colored urine
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LIPITOR are:

- Headache
- Diarrhea, gas
- Rash
- Constipation
- Upset stomach and stomach pain
- Muscle and joint pain

Side effects are usually mild and may go away by themselves. Fewer than 3 people out of 100 stopped taking LIPITOR because of side effects.

HOW TO TAKE LIPITOR

Do:

- Take LIPITOR as prescribed by your doctor.
- Try to eat heart-healthy foods while you take LIPITOR.
- Take LIPITOR at any time of day, with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But if it has been more than 12 hours since your missed dose, wait. Take the next dose at your regular time.

Don't:

- Do not change or stop your dose before talking to your doctor.
- Do not start new medicines before talking to your doctor.
- Do not give your LIPITOR to other people. It may harm them even if your problems are the same.
- Do not break the tablet.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or health care provider.
- Talk to your pharmacist.
- Go to **www.lipitor.com** or call **1-888-LIPITOR**.

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enough times:
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rule of dogs
for whom there
are no fool's
errands. To
loop out and
come back is
good all alone.
It's gravy to
carry a ball
or a bone.

—*Kay Ryan*

bulk purchases by ticket brokers. Selecting four ninety-five-dollar seats—for her and her "core group" of Jersey girlfriends—she hit the "Get Tickets" button. The transaction began, but just after the "Complete Purchase" button appeared, a message popped up saying, "System down for maintenance."

"What?" she thought. "They're doing maintenance now?"

She tried again. This time, a banner appeared at the bottom of the screen, redirecting her to TicketsNow, the secondary-market site, where, it said, "tickets might still be available." Indeed, tickets were available, at prices starting at around three hundred for the nosebleed seats in the rafters and rising into thousands for lower-loge seats near the stage.

"It had only been ten minutes," Shwalb said. "I thought, How the heck could all these people buy their tickets, and then list them for resale so fast?" Shwalb didn't know that Ticketmaster owned TicketsNow. When she found that out, she understood: Ticketmaster appeared to be supplying brokers and scalpers with primary-market tickets.

By 10 A.M., ninety-nine per cent of the tickets to the two Izod shows had been sold. Maria Shwalb failed to get a single one. She didn't even consider buying on TicketsNow—not because of the prices but because, she said, "a scalper's a scalper." Instead, she did what tens of thousands of other fans who couldn't get tickets that day did: she blamed Ticketmaster.

Both Ticketmaster and Live Nation enjoy monopoly-like dominance in their fields, but they achieved those positions by different means: Ticketmaster through technological innovation, like Microsoft, and Live Nation through consolidation, like Standard Oil. Together, these two companies have transformed the concert industry from a regional business, run by entrepreneurs, into a global one, run by corporate managers. Whether the incorporated concert business can make money is still an open question.

Bill Graham created the template for the independent promoter: part entrepreneur, part showman. By the early seventies, other men in other cities had followed him into the business: Don Law, in Boston; Ron Delsener and John Scher, in New York; Saul Hurwitz, in Washington, D.C.; and Jerry Mickelson, in Chicago. Eventually, about forty of these characters emerged in the metropolitan areas of North America. They ran their regional businesses like small fiefdoms, limiting competition, especially if they controlled exclusive venues where artists wanted to play, like Graham's storied halls—the Fillmore West, in San Francisco, and the Fillmore East, in New York.

From the beginning, concert promotion was a perilous business, because the promoter takes the risk of the concert not selling out (or, far worse, of the artist getting sick or even dying, which is what happened recently to AEG Live, the promoter of Michael Jackson's concerts at the O2 arena, in London). The promoter guarantees the artist a minimum fee or a split of the box-office, whichever is higher, and, out of his share of the "split point" rents the hall, buys advertising and insurance, hires security, arranges the ticketing, handles or contracts for concessions and merchandise sales and parking, and lays on the backstage catering. In the early days of rock concerts, the promoter got to keep forty per cent of the box-office, but, as the artists grew in stardom, managers and booking agents were able to negotiate ever larger splits for their clients; the promoters' share of the box-office shrank to twenty per cent, then to ten, and then to five. Graham used to say, "The only thing that is consistent in this business is that the promoter is always being asked to take less and less."

Ticketmaster was started in 1976 by two graduate students at Arizona State University who were frustrated at not being able to get tickets to their favorite rock shows. At the time, venues sold concert tickets from their own box offices, and also distributed tickets to record stores, head shops, and other outlets. Larger venues contracted with Ticketron, then the dominant company, to sell tickets over the phone from its network of call centers and from its outlets. Some locations would sell out quickly while others had tickets left over. The A.S.U. students devised a computer network that would allow outlets to share information about their inventory, and created a database from which all tickets were allocated.

In 1982, Jay Pritzker, a wealthy investor from Chicago, purchased Ticketmaster for four million dollars. Pritzker brought in a lawyer and former standup comedian named Fred Rosen to run the business, and Rosen made two key innovations. He insisted that Ticketmaster be the exclusive ticket seller for a given event, because by controlling the entire inventory Ticketmaster could offer fans the best available seat, no matter where they purchased tickets. Ticket buyers, Rosen calculated, would pay for the convenience. In return, Rosen offered promoters and venue operators a percentage of the extra charges. They were quick to embrace the new business model because it offset some of the losses from their shrinking split points. Ticketmaster bought what was left of Ticketron in 1991.

Rosen's strategy was brilliant, except for one thing: from the beginning, ticket buyers hated the fees. But ticket buyers weren't Ticketmaster's clients; the promoters and venue operators were. Ticketmaster was simply offering a service, which ticket buyers were free to forgo. As a practical matter, however, the concertgoer could hardly avoid Ticketmaster. In 1995, Pearl Jam refused to play in venues that contracted with Ticketmaster, with which it was already embattled. The band's tour, which played only in racetracks and small arenas, and which was plagued with bad weather and illness, was abandoned midway through. Pearl Jam blamed Ticketmaster.

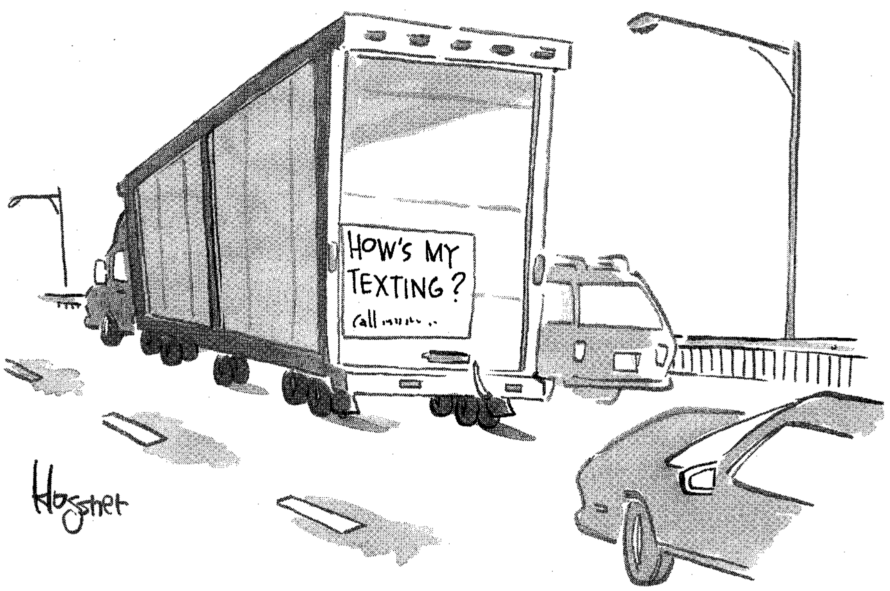
In 1996, Congress passed the Telecommunications Act, which, among other things, deregulated the radio industry. Robert F. X. Sillerman made a fortune by buying eighty regional radio stations and combining them into the giant SFX Broadcasting. He saw a similar opportunity to roll up regional concert promoters and assemble them into a branded, global rock-promotion company, to be called SFX Entertainment. By handling all the dates on a tour, Sillerman told me, SFX Entertainment could organize tours more efficiently, allowing acts to play more dates in less time. It could also attract nationwide sponsors for tours, which would increase revenues. In 1997, Sillerman began making promoters generous offers for their businesses, pledging to retain them as managers, doing what they had always been doing in their territories. By 2000, SFX had acquired eighty per cent of the promotion business. It also became the largest owner and operator of venues in the United States. That year, Sillerman sold the heavily indebted company to the radio conglomerate Clear Channel for $4.4 billion, and left the music business. Clear Channel couldn't make the company profitable, and in 2005 spun it off as Live Nation. Michael Rapino, a Canadian promoter who had sold out to SFX, became the C.E.O.

In 2007, Live Nation began making so-called "360" deals with superstar artists, among them Madonna and U2; the deals give Live Nation the right not only to promote the artists' shows exclusively but to be involved in other aspects of their careers as well. Ticketmaster responded by buying Front Line Management, partly owned by Irving Azoff, whose two hundred artists include some of the biggest acts in the touring business, the Eagles, Neil Diamond, and Jimmy Buffett among them. Azoff became the C.E.O. of the new company, Ticketmaster Entertainment, and began to eliminate surcharges by offering "all-in" ticketing, in which the fees were built into the face price of the tickets, like those the Eagles sold for some of the dates on their 2008 "Long Road Out of Eden" tour. Azoff also devised ways of charging scalpers' prices for the best seats, without raising the face value of the tickets, by selling well-heeled fans "V.I.P. packages" that included backstage access and a meet and greet with the artist. Meanwhile, Live Nation started to develop its own ticketing system, Live Nation Ticketing, which launched in January, 2009. But three weeks later it proved unable to cope with heavy demand for the Phish reunion tour and left countless fans angry.

By then, Ticketmaster and Live Nation had decided to stop competing with each other and agreed to merge. Rumors about the deal began to circulate, and on Wednesday, February 4th, two days after the Springsteen tickets went on sale, the *Wall Street Journal* published a report saying that Ticketmaster would merge with Live Nation in an all-stock transaction. But if any of the principals hoped that this would help smooth the way for the formal announcement of the deal, the following Tuesday, they were mistaken. That afternoon, the worst possible critic of a merger—the Boss himself—weighed in.

Maria Shwalb wasn't the only Springsteen fan redirected to TicketsNow on February 2nd. According to information later furnished by Ticketmaster, some eighty-five thousand people in the Northeast received the same message. Springsteen's management began to hear complaints within an hour of the tickets going on sale. "People just started calling the office," Jon Landau, Springsteen's manager, told me. Landau himself took a call from two people who worked for a federal government agency in Washington, seeking an explanation. They were calling in their official capacity, but "they were also fans who were trying to get seats," Landau said. "They'd been shut out, too."

On the afternoon of February 4th, Springsteen posted a letter on his Web site, saying he and his team were "furious" with Ticketmaster for the handling of the Izod Center tickets, citing the redirecting of fans to its subsidiary, TicketsNow. He stated, "They did this even when other seats remained available at face value. We condemn this practice," and added, "The one thing that would


HOW'S MY TEXTING?
Call ...
Hoppner

make the current ticket situation even worse for the fan than it is now would be Ticketmaster and Live Nation coming up with a single system. . . . If you, like us, oppose that idea, you should make it known to your representatives."

The next day, Azoff issued an open letter of apology. "While we were genuinely trying to do the right thing for fans in providing more choices when the tickets they requested from the primary on-sale were not available, we clearly missed the mark," he wrote. "Fans are confused and angry, which is the opposite of what we hoped to accomplish." While it appeared to fans like Maria Shwalb that Ticketmaster was abetting scalping on TicketsNow, the actual reason for the redirects, according to Ticketmaster, was a technical problem that occurred in the software used to verify buyers' credit-card information. The glitch appeared at 9:09 A.M. on the day of the sale; Ticketmaster became aware of it at nine-forty-nine, and it was fixed by eleven-thirty. By then, both Izod Center shows were sold out.

But not many Springsteen fans believed Ticketmaster's explanation. If the company wasn't moving tickets onto TicketsNow, who was? In fact, brokers routinely offer tickets that they don't yet have in their possession, and people looking for tickets to other artists' shows had also complained about being directed to TicketsNow. Ticketmaster had been the object of so much ill will, over so many years, that it was almost second nature for fans to blame the box-office monster. More than two thousand complaints were filed with the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, including one by Maria Shwalb. Some fans filed a class-action lawsuit against Ticketmaster. Courageous New Jersey politicians lined up to support a fan's right to a low-priced Springsteen ticket. The state's attorney general, Anne Milgram, opened an investigation. Bill Pascrell, Jr., a New Jersey congressman, called for legislation to restrict ticket scalping, and make the murky world of ticket selling more transparent. (In June, Pascrell introduced to Congress the BOSS ACT—Better Oversight of Secondary Sales and Accountability in Concert Ticketing.) In Washington, the Federal Trade Commission launched an investigation into the ticketing fiasco; the Justice Department also announced an inquiry into the Ticketmaster-Live Nation merger.

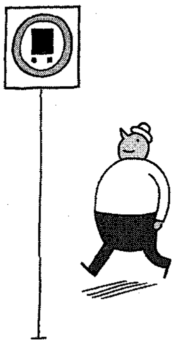
Ticketmaster quickly came to an agreement with Milgram's office, but did not admit any wrongdoing. In addition to paying a three-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar fine, Ticketmaster pledged to reimburse fans who claimed they had erroneously bought tickets on TicketsNow; this cost the company another three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Ticketmaster also promised not to link to TicketsNow for a period of one year. The New Jersey Sports Authority agreed to conduct a raffle for fans who had filed complaints, using tickets that the authority had kept back from the initial sale.

In early April, the authority notified Maria Shwalb that she had won the right to purchase two tickets to the May 23rd show. She got good seats—Lower Loge, Section 124—and she invited her friend Marlene Caprio, from Hopatcong, whom she had known since college, to join her. They made plans to get to the venue early enough to tailgate in the parking lot before the show. Saturday night with the Boss in the swamps of Jersey at the start of summer: "It is going to be awesome," Shwalb told me.

Springsteen's remarks about the Ticketmaster-Live Nation merger resonated in the chambers of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy, and Consumer Rights, when both Azoff and Rapino testified in a one-day hearing into the merger, at the end of February. (The subcommittee advises the Justice Department on the merger, but Justice has the authority on whether or not to approve it; the decision has yet to be made.) Virtually all the speakers referred to the Springsteen situation. Senator Charles E. Schumer, of New York, declared, "Bruce Springsteen says Ticketmaster abused his fans, and I agree with the Boss." Schumer also questioned Ticketmaster's explanation of exactly what happened on February 2nd: "Given what Ticketmaster stood to gain by directing consumers to its own resell site, the episode seems to be much more about money-making than about 'malfunction.'" (In April, Schumer proposed new anti-scalping legislation, partly in response to the outcry over the Springsteen shows.)

The merged company, to be called Live Nation Entertainment, could monopolize the concert industry. It would combine not only the world's largest ticket seller and the world's largest management company with the world's largest concert promoter and the world's largest venue operator but also the interests of Azoff; Rapino; Barry Diller, who is reportedly slated to become the chairman of the new company; John Malone, the chairman of the cable operator Liberty Global, which is a major Ticketmaster shareholder; and Ariel Emanuel, a prominent Hollywood agent who is a member of the board of Live Nation and the brother of Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's chief of staff. In theory, Live Nation Entertainment could compete unfairly with AEG Live, the second-largest concert promoter, which was started by the Denver-based billionaire Phil Anschutz in 2005, and with the handful of remaining independent promoters, such as John Scher, who had declined to sell to Sillerman back in the nineties. As both manager and promoter, the company could deny its superstar acts to venues that refuse to use its promotional and ticket-selling services. Ticketmaster maintains that the new merger won't be anti-competitive, because new ticketing technology allows independent promoters and venues to ticket their own shows, and that the managers' interests will reflect the artists' wishes.

When I went to see John Scher recently, in his offices on lower Fifth Avenue, he said he had turned down SFX's offer of seventeen million dollars for his company, Metropolitan Talent, because "I'm hardheaded." (His head—large, bald, and bony—looks like it could do some damage if it butted you.) "And because in my view this industry was never right for consolidation." It was a "regional, entrepreneurial business" that, with consolidation, became "all about market share and not profitability." Because the promoter's margins were so slim, he had to monitor every detail of an event, including how much ice the barmen put in the glasses, or he wouldn't make money. "That changed with consolidation," Scher went on. "SFX said to acts, 'How much are you making on this tour? Two hundred and fifty thousand? O.K., we'll pay you three hundred and fifty thousand for every date on the tour.' Soon, eighty per cent of the headliners are doing national tours, for inflated guarantees. What's the result? Live Nation can't make money. So they go to Ticketmaster and say, 'We need a bigger piece of the service charges.' So Ticketmaster raises its service charges. And then what happens? The public gets fed up. Six- to eight-dollar beers, expensive hot dogs, outrageous parking fees, and expensive tickets—who needs it? So all that starts to erode the business, then gas prices go up, then the economy tanks. And then Michael Rapino stands up in front of Congress and says the business model is broken, and therefore Live Nation has to merge with Ticketmaster. Well, who broke it?"



On the other hand, if the concert business is to become what the record business was for the entire music industry—the hub from which everything else flows, as Rapino put it in his testimony to the subcommittee—then something needs to be done. Because, if new superstars aren't developed, the concert industry will die, just as the record industry is dying, and then there won't be much of a music business at all. Danny Goldberg, a longtime music-industry professional, told me recently, "I'm not a big fan of consolidation, but it's better than anarchy."

Irving Azoff, who in more carefree days helped Joe Walsh, a client, cut a door-size hole in a hotel-room wall with a chain saw so that they could have adjoining rooms, is now widely seen as the last best hope for the music business. When I asked him what was wrong with it, he replied, "The way the industry is monetized has totally changed. The order used to be: first, records; second, live; third, merchandise. Now it's: first, live; second, third-party sponsorship; third, merchandise; fourth, publishing; fifth, records. So that's a big difference." He added, "And the business model has changed. The old model was: put a single on the radio, put a video on MTV, and sit back and watch the music sell. That is gone. MTV doesn't play many videos, and radio has playlists that are targeted toward a specific, narrow demographic—white females between thirty-five and forty-five, say. Well, that's not a group from which to build a large fan base."

Azoff also told me that he would be happy to see Congress pass new legislation prohibiting scalping, although he didn't have much hope of that happening. But, I asked, wouldn't those laws spell the end of TicketsNow? "I wouldn't have bought TicketsNow if I were running Ticketmaster then," he replied. In the short term, he went on, "paperless ticketing" was proving to be an effective tool for combatting the secondary market. For this fall's Miley Cyrus tour, Ticketmaster offered only paperless tickets: instead of receiving printed tickets in advance, concertgoers must bring to the venue the credit card they purchased tickets with as well as a matching I.D. As a result, there are very few Miley Cyrus tickets for sale on the secondary market. (Springsteen recently announced that Ticketmaster will offer only paperless ticketing for some sections of the venues he's playing in the fall.)

Azoff suggested, by way of an anecdote, that a dynamic pricing system—in which ticket prices would fluctuate with market demand, as they do on the secondary market—might be the future of concert ticketing. "Before I testified in Washington," he said, "one of the committee members called me into his office and said, 'What are you guys, fucking stupid?' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'You've got the only business I can think of where the price goes up as soon as the merchandise leaves the store. It's crazy.' Then he said he flies back and forth a lot to see his family, and the reason he can do that is because the coach seats are reasonably priced, because some people are paying first class. 'When are you guys going to go to a dynamic pricing system, so that the people who pay a hundred and fifty dollars for seats up front can subsidize thirty-dollar seats at the back?' he asked. I said, 'That makes sense.' " While a dynamic system would make hot tickets like those to Springsteen's Izod Center shows more expensive, it could also make tickets to less sought-after shows less expensive; on StubHub, tickets to Springsteen's Greensboro show sold for as little as twelve dollars.

I wondered whether live music had a long-term future at all. Azoff wasn't worried. "Since 1966, when I started in this business, I've worked in almost every aspect of entertainment," he told me. "I've been a manager, I've run a record label, I've produced TV shows and movies—pretty much everything. And, still, the most powerful thing I know of in entertainment is the live experience. The performer onstage receiving the adulation of the fans—there's nothing like it, and that's never going away." He rejected the idea that the live business would suffer from a lack of artist development. "Taylor Swift—and she's not even my client!—or the Kings of Leon. These are career artists that are going to be around for a long time." Would they fill stadiums and arenas forty years into their careers, as the Eagles do? "Absolutely," Azoff said. He added that he thought stealing music had actually generated more interest in live music. "So I'm not one of those guys who goes around saying the sky is falling."

A few days before the first of the two Izod dates, the New Jersey *Star-Ledger* ran a story about how many tickets had been held back from the initial sale of the Izod shows and who had held them; Ticketmaster made this information available to the New Jersey attorney general during the investigation. The numbers revealed an inconvenient truth for Springsteen and the politicians who had rallied to his side: many of the seats had been held back by Springsteen himself. In June, the *Star-Ledger* ran another article pointing out that the holds included many of the best seats. According to the newspaper, 2,262 seats were held back for the May 21st show, which represented sixty per cent of the best seats in the house. Springsteen, the band, his management company, and Columbia Records, his label, had retained 1,450, and the New Jersey Sports Authority, its sponsors, and the media got the rest. (None of the ninety-eight hundred seats in the upper tier were held back.) Of the 1,126 seats in the four lower-loge sections closest to the stage—the very best seats in the house—all but a hundred and eight were kept from the initial sale. (The *Star-Ledger's* hold numbers were from March; by showtime in May many of these seats had been released to the public.)

"Everyone knows that in New York and Los Angeles you have to keep a fair number of tickets back," Jon Landau ex-

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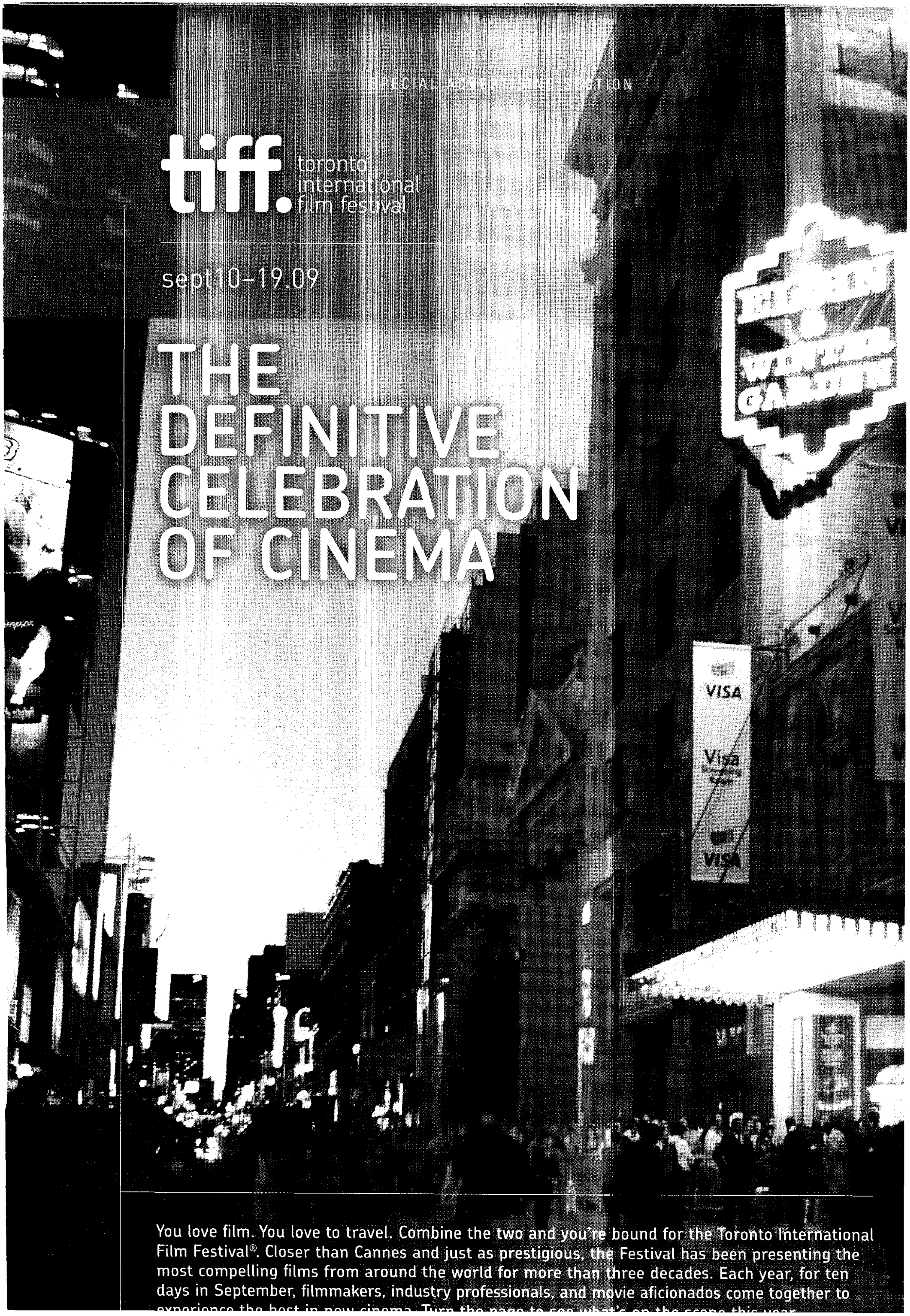

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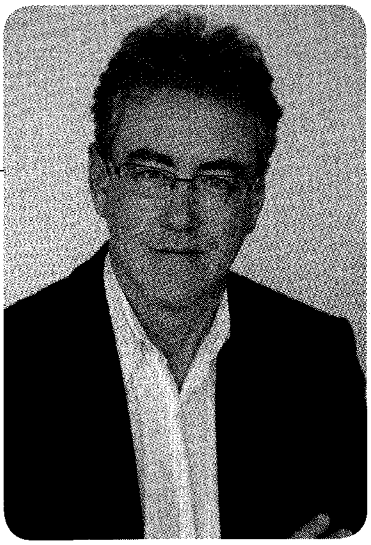
Taking Center Stage with Piers Handling

Director and C.E.O., Toronto International Film Festival



Piers Handling

The 34th annual Toronto International Film Festival gets under way on September 10th, offering the cream of international cinema over ten days in the world's friendliest big city. As Director and C.E.O. of TIFF, Piers Handling is the artistic leader of one of the world's most vibrant cultural organizations. Mr. Handling talks about what makes the Festival one of the world's most prominent festivals and cultural destinations.

How does Toronto stand out from other festivals?

The public owns it. From the beginning, it was meant to be the people's festival, and our most important award—the Cadillac People's Choice Award—is chosen by our audience.

How has the Festival changed?

The founders wanted to do a broad selection of the best films from around the world. We've remained true to that core mission, and it's always retained its friendly flavor. Today, Toronto is seen as one of the must-attend festivals and a major industry destination—one of the key marketplaces where films are bought and sold.

Tell me about Bell Lightbox, the brand new headquarters project scheduled to open in 2010.

It was always a dream of mine to create a true center for film in North America. It's a huge project for us, and our target for fundraising is $196 million. For more than thirty years, people from all around the world have gathered at the Festival to celebrate the extraordinary riches of the cinema. Bell Lightbox will help satisfy the demand of the many thousands of people who turn to the Festival every year to celebrate film. In addition to theaters, the building will have a gallery, a learning studio, two restaurants, a retail store, and a box office. During the Festival itself, it will become the true center of the event, a real gathering spot.

How important are the interactive elements at the Festival, like Q&A sessions?

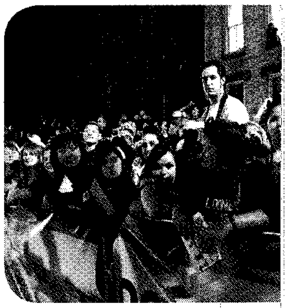
It is one of the long-standing traditions of this Festival: the interaction of the audience with the filmmaker. Very few people come face-to-face with a director or a movie star. During the Festival, people get the chance to connect with the best and brightest in world cinema today through Q&A sessions, the red carpet, and industry events. The live part of the Festival cannot be duplicated.

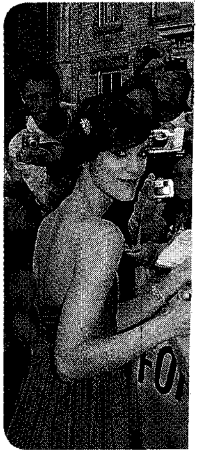
What can we look forward to this year?

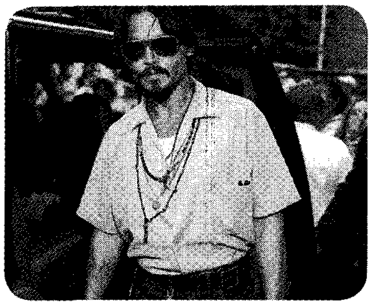
We are really excited to offer lots of free activities, including outdoor screenings and events at Yonge-Dundas Square, a large downtown public gathering spot in Toronto. One of the new programs this year is called City to City, which will explore the evolving urban experience while presenting the best films from and about a city—this year is Tel Aviv. It will be a new kind of look at Israeli cinema.

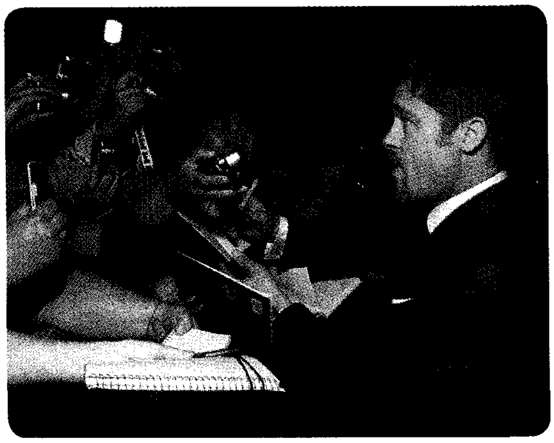
How important are the many Hollywood premières?

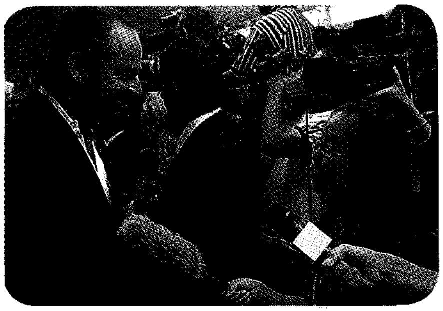
Every festival needs that kind of attention and glamour. But the Festival is a supermarket, with hundreds of options: you could come here for ten days and not see anything from Hollywood. You can dip in and see a variety of films, including high-profile work from celebrated filmmakers as well as independents. When I talk to my friends about what they've seen, I realize they've each had an entirely different experience. It's great that people can create their own festivals within the larger event.











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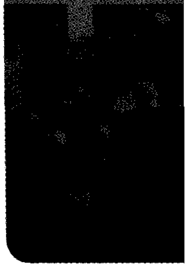
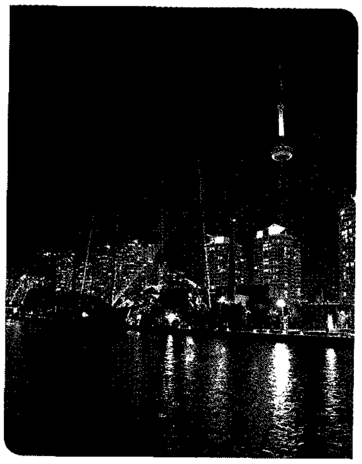
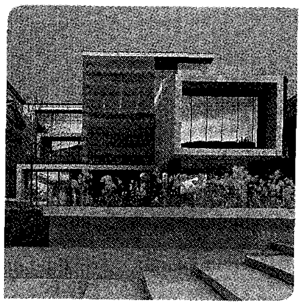
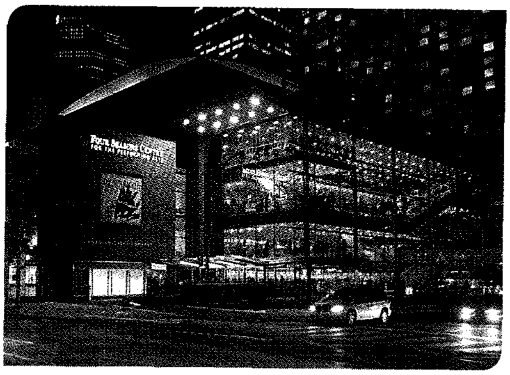


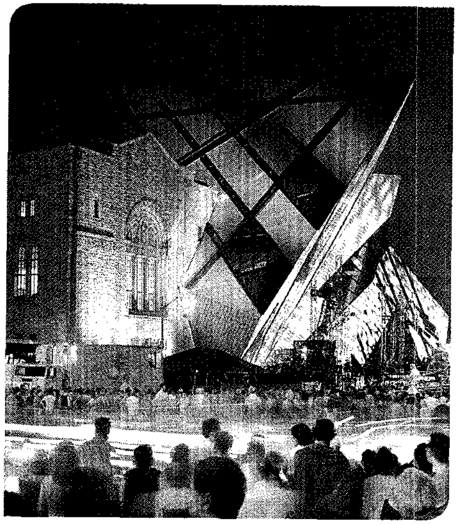
SPOTLIGHT ON TORONTO: A CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

Just north of the border is perhaps the best kept cultural secret on this continent: Toronto. One of the most diverse cities in the world, Toronto boasts an abundance of enriched institutions that cater to the arts and entertainment—125 museums and public archives; more than 1,000 festivals, including the Toronto International Film Festival; and more than 90 theaters. Any given day, there are up to 40 productions filming somewhere in the city, securing its title as "Hollywood North." In fact, the Entertainment District offersan array of attractions for everyone from the sports fanatic to the Broadway musical lover. Renowned sites include the famed comedy spot Second City and the awe-inspiring CN Tower, whose spire can be seen for miles.









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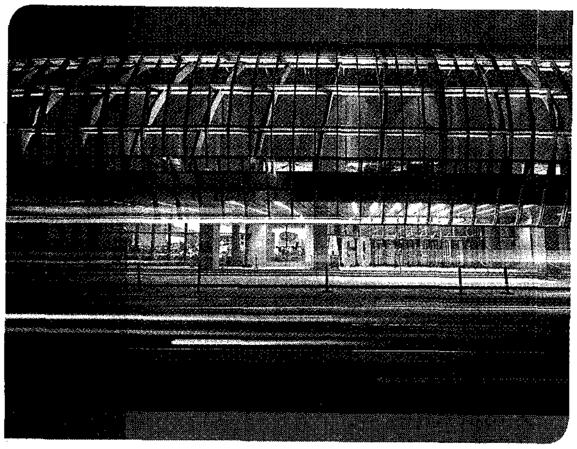

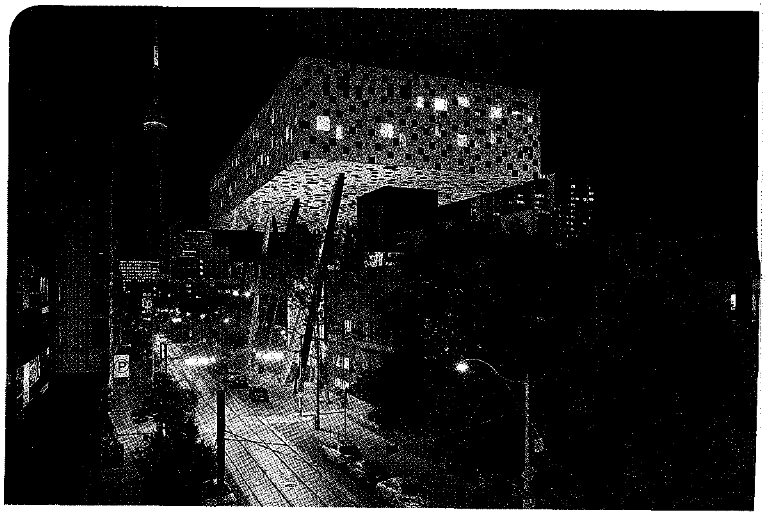

tourism toronto

Toronto Convention & Visitors Association

Clockwise from bottom left: Art Gallery of Ontario (photo by Sam Javanrouh), Royal Ontario Museum (photo courtesy of Royal Ontario Museum), Harbourfront Centre (photo provided by torontowide.com), Gardiner Museum (photo provided by torontowide.com), Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (photo by Shai Gill), Sharp Centre for Design at the Ontario College of Art & Design (photo by Tom Arban).

plained to me. "There's a lot of media, most of the band and the crew live around here, and they want to be able to invite family and friends to the show. And you need tickets for your record company, agency, and V.I.P.s, which is a very real phenomenon in New York and L.A. If Faith Hill and Tim McGraw call up and want to see a show, you'd like to be able to offer them good tickets." (Landau also pointed out, in a letter posted on Springsteen's Web site, that the holds were blended with the fan seats.)

No one was accusing Springsteen of scalping these tickets—the idea was unthinkable. By pricing the best seats at ninety-five dollars, however, Springsteen was giving fans like Maria Shwalb the illusion of getting a good seat for cheap, when in fact many of the best seats never went on sale at all. Also, by holding back so many choice seats, Springsteen was contributing to the high prices for the few that were available on the secondary market—a fact that ticket brokers were quick to note. Don Vaccaro, the C.E.O. of TicketNetwork, a brokerage site, has said, "It's unfortunate that fans were misled that most of the best tickets were made available to the public. . . . More surprising is that an artist who claims to be for the common man would be part of that scheme." Not long after Vaccaro made that statement, three ticket resellers, including TicketNetwork, were sued by the New Jersey attorney general for selling tickets to a series of Springsteen shows at Giants Stadium that had just been announced for the fall—tickets that had not yet gone on sale.

At around five-thirty on the afternoon of Saturday, May 23rd, Maria Shwalb steered her pewter-colored Nissan with "JNGL LD" license plates off Route 3. She passed the spot just inside the Izod access road where the scalpers usually congregate, but no scalpers were there. She was directed to a parking space near the arena, and she and Marlene Caprio got out their lawn chairs and the cooler, and settled in among the faithful for a tailgate party.

Shwalb had no problems with all the tickets the Boss had held back. "It's his show," she said, and laughed. "Bruce can do no wrong in my book."

"I just hope he plays 'Jersey Girl,' " Marlene said.

All around, other fans were drinking beer, playing bean-bag-toss games, blasting Springsteen from boom boxes, and dancing, possibly with strangers.

Shwalb spotted a volunteer who was collecting money for the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, a charity that Springsteen supports, and she reminded her friend to make a donation before they went in, because that would also enter them in a raffle for two tickets to stand right in front of the stage.

At about seven, they got in line to pick up their tickets. Nearby was a lone fan with a "Need Tickets" sign hanging from his chest, forlornly askew.

"Where are all the scalpers?" I asked him. Combing the crowd earlier, I hadn't seen any, and concluded that the Internet, in fostering a nation of scalpers, has been hard on the sidewalk men.

"They're around," the ticket seeker said confidently. "They're just lying low." But he was still standing there, alone, at seven-thirty, a half hour to showtime.

By eight o'clock, Shwalb and Caprio were in their seats. When a representative of the Community Food Bank called the winning raffle number, a scream rang through the arena—it was Maria. She and Marlene had won. They were escorted down to the stage just as the house lights dimmed, a roar went up from the crowd, and, with the opening riff of "Badlands," the stage lights came on to reveal Bruce, almost close enough to touch.

And so Maria Shwalb's dream did come true. An investigation by the New Jersey attorney general and a class-action suit went down and two strokes of good fortune were required before it happened, suggesting that the dream still needs some work, but that didn't matter to Maria. All that mattered for the next two and a half hours was the singer, the song, and the press of flesh around her. "It was an absolutely amazing, exciting, awesome experience—to be that close after all these years," she told me after the show. "We felt like we were twenty-one again and could party and dance all night." ♦

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

From the Washington Post.

A May 22 editorial on Virginia's Democratic gubernatorial primary incorrectly stated that Terry R. McAuliffe had described himself as a "huckster." In his autobiography, Mr. McAuliffe described himself as a "hustler."

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INSECTS

Eleven days from St. Petersburg, Sergei Lunev, Volodya Chumak, and I were well into the swampy flatlands of western Siberia. It was the summer of 2001, and we were driving across Siberia in a converted Renault step van that had formerly delivered eggs and sour cream and sometimes didn't start. Every night, we were camping out. In a country without fences or "No Trespassing" signs, we had an abundance of places to camp, but each one required a certain amount of searching nonetheless. Sergei sometimes spent an hour or more in the evenings looking—stopping, getting out, walking around, then trying somewhere else. He wanted ground that was dry, not too low, not too many trash heaps, near water if possible, away from the road but not too difficult to get to. When he was satisfied with his find, he would pronounce it a "*khoroshoe mesto*"—a good place.

The country's swampiness did not manifest itself in great expanses of water with reeds and trees in it, like the Florida Everglades. There were wide rivers and reedy places, but also birch groves and hills and yellow fields. The way you could tell you were in the swamp was, first, that the ground became impassably soggy if you walked at all far in any direction; and, second, by the mosquitoes.

I have been in mosquito swarms in beaver meadows in northern Michigan, in boreal wetlands in Canada, and near Alaska's Yukon River. Western Siberia has more. On calm and sultry evenings as we busied ourselves around the camp, mosquitoes came at us as if shot from a fire hose. Usually mosquitoes cluster in a cloud around their targets, but as Volodya made dinner I observed a thick and proximate cloud surrounding him head to toe, and then a whole other sort of candidate swarm around that inner swarm, and then more in all directions, minutely enlivening the sky.

With such astronomical numbers, Siberian mosquitoes have learned to diversify. There are the majority, of course, who just bite you anywhere. Those are your general-practitioner mosquitoes, or G.P.s. Then, you have your specialists—your eye, ear, nose, and throat mosquitoes. Eye mosquitoes fly directly at the eyeball and crash-land there. The reason for this tactic is a mystery. The

Passengers waiting to board the Trans-Siberian Railway in Krasnoyarsk. Phantoms thronged

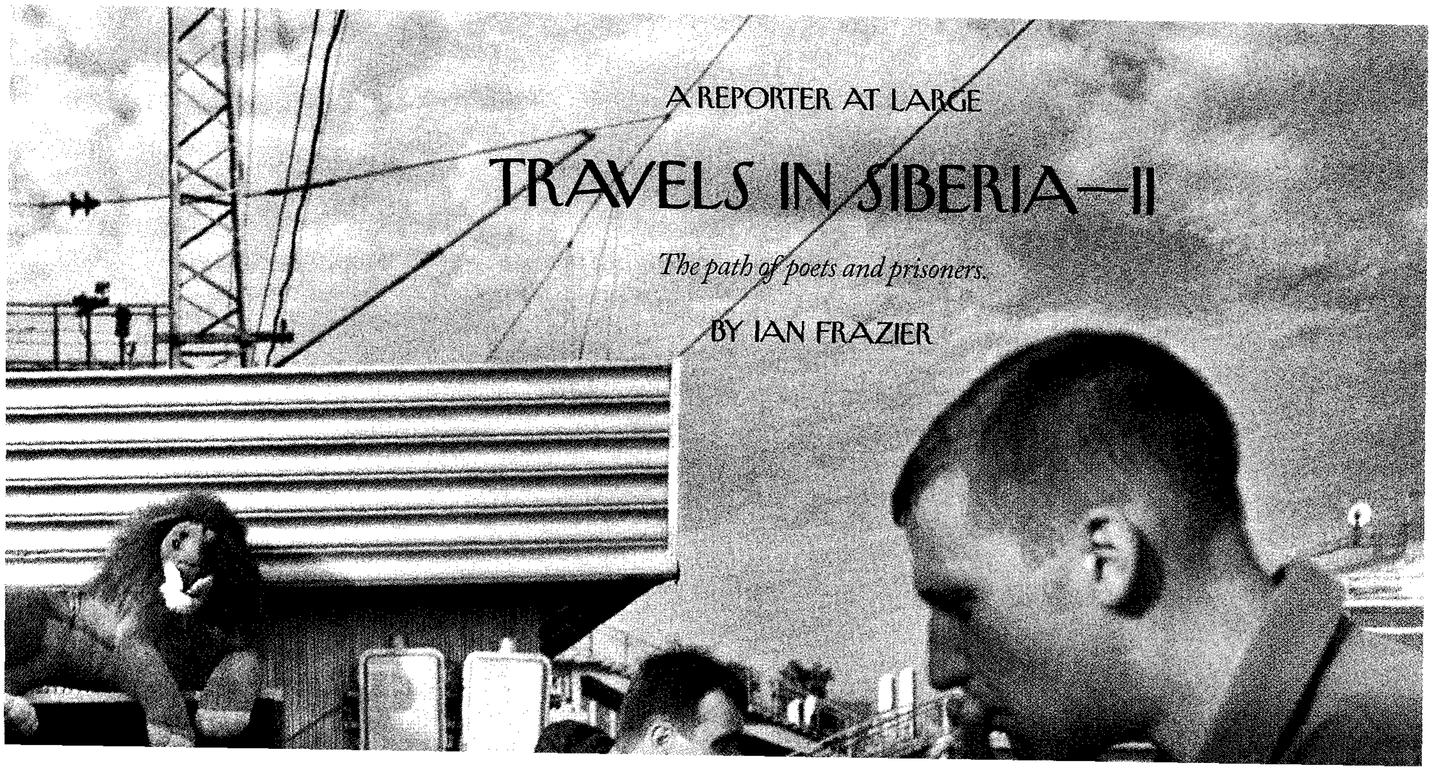
MAGNUM

A REPORTER AT LARGE

TRAVELS IN SIBERIA—II

The path of poets and prisoners.

BY IAN FRAZIER



ear mosquito goes into the ear canal and then slams itself deafeningly back and forth—part of a larger psyops strategy, maybe. Nose and throat mosquitoes wait for their moment, then surf into those passages as far as they can go on the indrawn breath of air. Even deep inside they keep flying as long as possible and emit a desperate buzzing, as if radioing for backup.

Nothing short of a good breeze keeps Siberian mosquitoes down. They laugh at organic-based repellents. Strong repellent with DEET is disagreeable to them, but they work around it. Thick smoke can be effective, but you have to stand right in it. In past times, native peoples and Russians wove fine netting of the long hairs in a horse's tail and wore the nets throughout the summer. Members of a tribe called the Tungus carried smoke pots with them wherever they went, while another native people, the Voguls, retreated into smoke-filled huts for the summer months and became dormant, doing most of their hunting and travelling in the wintertime. The sheer volume of mosquitoes might cause an observer not to mention the gnats, flies, and tiny biting insects (known as "no-see-'ums" in America); there are plenty of all those as well. Sometimes in the evenings, I imagined I could hear the great insect totality tuning up all around, a continent-wide humming.

The mosquitoes kept tabs on us vigilantly everywhere we moved, indoors as well as out. Because our campsites were just places along the road, the bathroom arrangements had to be of the walk-off-into-the-bushes variety. Tending to necessities while under insect attack was a real experience. I recalled what a Siberian traveller named Hans Jakob Fries had written about this problem more than two centuries ago. Fries was a Swiss doctor, whose book, "Reise Durch Sibirien" ("Travel in Siberia"), described a journey he made in 1776 and, incidentally, became one of the earliest books to use that serviceable title. Fries wrote that during his passage through western Siberia he was bitten on a "delicate portion of my privy parts . . . so severely by a horse fly . . . that for three days I didn't know where to turn on account of pain, and I had the greatest trouble to prevent the setting in of gangrene." The recollection of Fries's misfortune filled me with caution, not to say fear.

Sergei had provided each of us with a special anti-mosquito hat, called a *nakomarnik*, that was draped with netting and resembled something a beekeeper might wear. When the mosquitoes were worst, we wore those hats, and gloves, and we tucked our pant legs into our boots. Dressed this way, we could move around and perform most essential activities. I found sketching and taking notes to be difficult with gloves on. Also, the no-see-'ums got through the holes in the netting, and were hard to swat once inside. A few mosquitoes always sneaked in as well, and whined maddeningly. As Volodya cooked meals on the propane stove, mosquitoes attracted by the rising vapors flew over the pot, swooned from the heat, and fell in. When we ate our oatmeal in the morning, there were often a few mosquito bodies in it. Most of them we just ate, but sometimes there were ones that had bitten somebody and were full of blood . . .

Bugs are just part of the Siberian situation, as inescapable as distance and monotony. That long-suffering traveller Chekhov described a cockroach-infested room in the jailhouse where he spent the night in a tiny settlement on Sakhalin Island:

> It seemed as though the walls and ceiling were covered with black crepe, which stirred as if blown by a wind. From the rapid and disorderly movements of portions of the crepe you could guess the composition of this boiling, seething mass. You could hear rustling and a loud whispering, as if the insects were hurrying off somewhere and carrying on a conversation.

V. K. Arsenyev, the Russian Army officer and explorer who in the early nineteen-hundreds mapped some of the most inaccessible parts of the Primorskii Krai, north of Vladivostok, wrote about flies that fell so thickly they put out his campfire; Dostoyevsky waxed lyrical about the blessed moment in the cool of pre-dawn in the prison barracks when the fleas stopped biting and the convicts could sleep; and John Bell, a Scottish doctor in the employ of Peter the Great, noted that his ambassadorial party, bound for Peking in 1719, changed their route across eastern Siberia partly because they were "much pestered with gnats and muskitoes." The swarms afflicted animals, too—descending on young foals in such numbers as to kill them, suffocating reindeer in Yakutia by clogging up their nostrils, tormenting cattle on the Barabinsk Steppe so that the herdsmen had to paint them all over with tar. Some of my Siberian notebooks still have squashed mosquitoes between their pages. The Lonely Planet guidebook to Russia that I consulted before I went on my journey states, in the section about Siberia, "By August, the air has cleared of mosquitoes." From my experience, this is no longer the case.

CAMP YERMAK

As we followed the banks of the Tura River going northeast, we came to the village of Pokrovskoye. I had wanted to check this village out because it was the home town of Rasputin—not Valentin Rasputin, the Siberian writer, but the original unhinged self-described holy man Rasputin, abettor of the downfall of the Romanov line. The village was all gray wood and stretched along the river for miles. Sergei did not care to look for Rasputin memorabilia—for an old church associated with Rasputin, perhaps, or a Rasputin museum. And Rasputin was not the kind of celebrity whose home place seemed eager to claim him; I saw no signs anywhere, including at either edge of town, that mentioned his name. Later, I heard that there is a small Rasputin museum in Pokrovskoye, but to visit it you have to make arrangements in advance. Sergei drove straight through the village without a pause while I fretted and said nothing. Rasputin, it was said, gave off a powerful odor of goat. What a museum you could make about a guy like that! Oh, well.

A few hours later, we came to a river I'd long wanted to see—the Tobol. This is the river that Yermak, the almost mythical conqueror of Siberia, travelled as he approached his decisive battle with the Khan of Sibir. The problem was, we could glimpse the river only off in the distance, because for most of its length it's really more like a deeper part of a continuous swamp. Trying to get close to it in the late afternoon, we drove up on a small hill. Birch groves and a meadow of long grasses covered the hill, which on its far side ended at a cliff descending steeply to the Tobol itself. Here the view swept far around a long continuation of the cliff that enclosed a wide swath of water made by a sharply turning river bend. This seemed an ideal camping place. Sergei parked the van back from the cliff, in a clearing in the birch woods, and set up the tents for the night.

Along the cliff a kilometre or two away, the roofs and smokestacks of a village mingled with the silhouetted trees. According to somebody we had talked to on the road, the village was called Berezovyi Yar—Birch Cliff. A breeze was blowing, rendering our supper pleasantly mosquito-free. After the meal, as the light was declining, Sergei and Volodya proposed that they walk over to the village, buy some bread, and find out about the area. While they were there, I would stay and keep watch over the camp and the van.

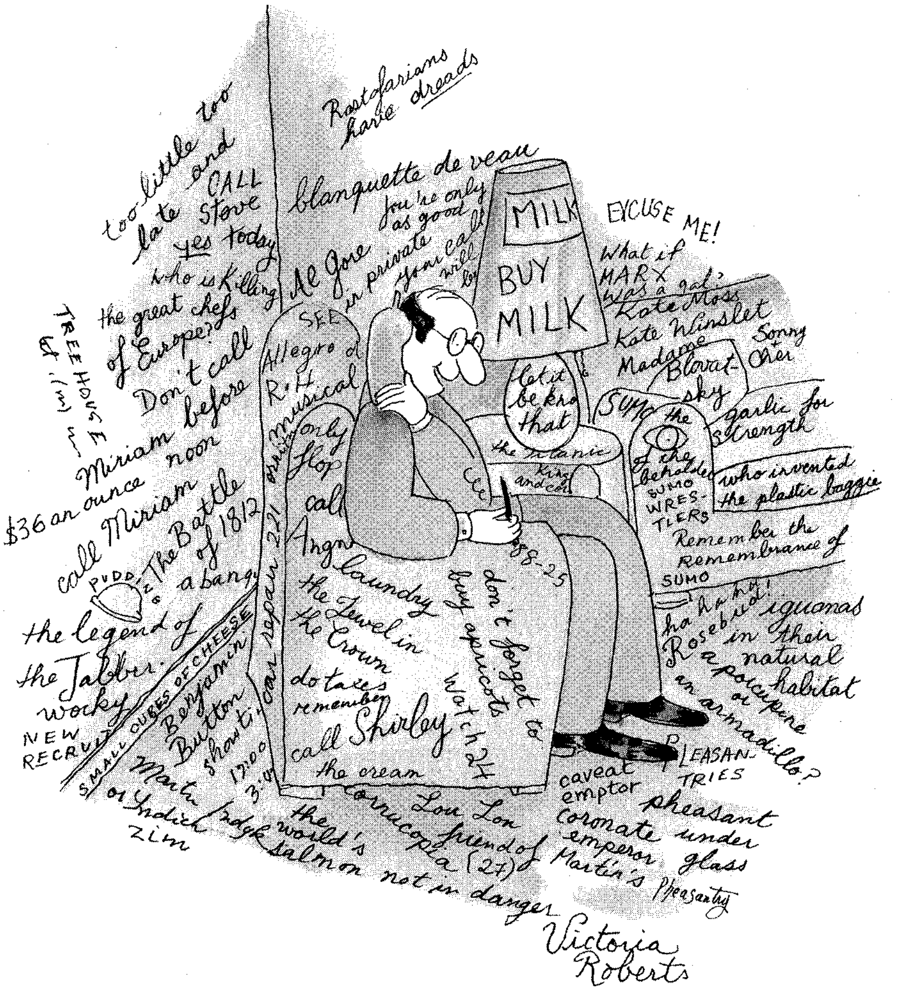
I did not like being left in camp, but I had brought that duty on myself. What with my awkwardness in the language, and the fact that I didn't drink, I sometimes preferred to stay in camp and read a book while Sergei and Volodya were hanging out and socializing with people they'd met along the way. But that does not quite describe the problem, either. By now we were in remote places where the arrival of a vehicle with St. Petersburg license plates was news. Even the highway police, when they waved us over at checkpoints, were a bit wide-eyed as they examined our documents—"Where do you live in America? What do you do?"—and so on. One young policeman, before he saw my passport, asked wistfully, "Is it expensive to live in St. Petersburg?" And this curiosity seemed to affect the local women even more strongly than it did the men.

I'm not saying that women paraded through our campsites wherever we happened to be; but they did show up occasionally, even when we were camped far from any village. A few nights before, in a glade well off the road, I had just got into my sleeping bag when Sergei rousted me out so that I could meet two women whom he described as schoolteachers eager to meet me. Dutifully, I got up and emerged and made conversation with the schoolteachers for a while. They had wanted to see the American, and I think Sergei had felt compelled to prove that he really did have one. Then he and Volodya and the schoolteachers went off—to a birthday party, Sergei said, at a picnic spot nearby. I demurred and returned to my tent. The idea of chasing women in Siberia would have made me nervous even had I not been married. Sergei and Volodya found my reluctance mystifying.

Tobolsk, our local destination—a must-see as far as I was concerned—was about an hour and a half away. In the morning, Sergei announced that we would drive to Tobolsk now, spend the day there, then come back here and camp for another night.

Rather tiredly, he and Volodya broke camp and packed the van. Then we drove off, with a first stop at the village, where three women were waiting for us. The youngest of them, a sturdy, round woman of about thirty with blond-streaked hair, came up to Sergei and took his hand. She seemed delighted with her luck in having met him. The other two women were in their late fifties or early sixties and did not appear to have been principals in last night's socializing. These two were sisters. One of them was the blond-streaked young woman's mother, the other her aunt.

Both the aunt and the mother had brown, deeply weathered faces. The mother wore a brown cloth Lenin-type cap, a dark-gray overcoat-smock with holes in it, brown bloused pants with red-brown patches, and knee-high rubber boots. The aunt was dressed similarly, but she had a head of wiry hair dyed yellow-orange. Both carried big galvanized pails. They were on their way to pick berries, and we were going to give them a ride to the berry patch, a few kilometres away. The mother started right in talking to me. Sergei must have told her that I was interested in Yermak, because she informed me that Yermak and his men had camped at the exact spot where we were last night. I asked how she knew this and she said, "It's a fact, everybody knows it," adding that the aunt had even written a paper about this subject. The aunt nodded her head in confirmation. The mother went on to tell us about the aunt's paper, and what it said, and where it was published. With more verifying nods, the aunt


too little too late and
CALL Stove
yes today
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Don't call Miriam before noon
TREE HOUSE
$36 an ounce
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The Battle of 1812
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King and Cole
EXCUSE ME!
What if MARX was a gal?
Kate Moss
Kate Winslet
Madame Blavatsky
Sonny + Cher
SUMO
the eye of the beholder
garlic for strength
SUMO WRESTLERS
who invented the plastic baggie
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iguanas in their natural habitat
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pheasant under glass
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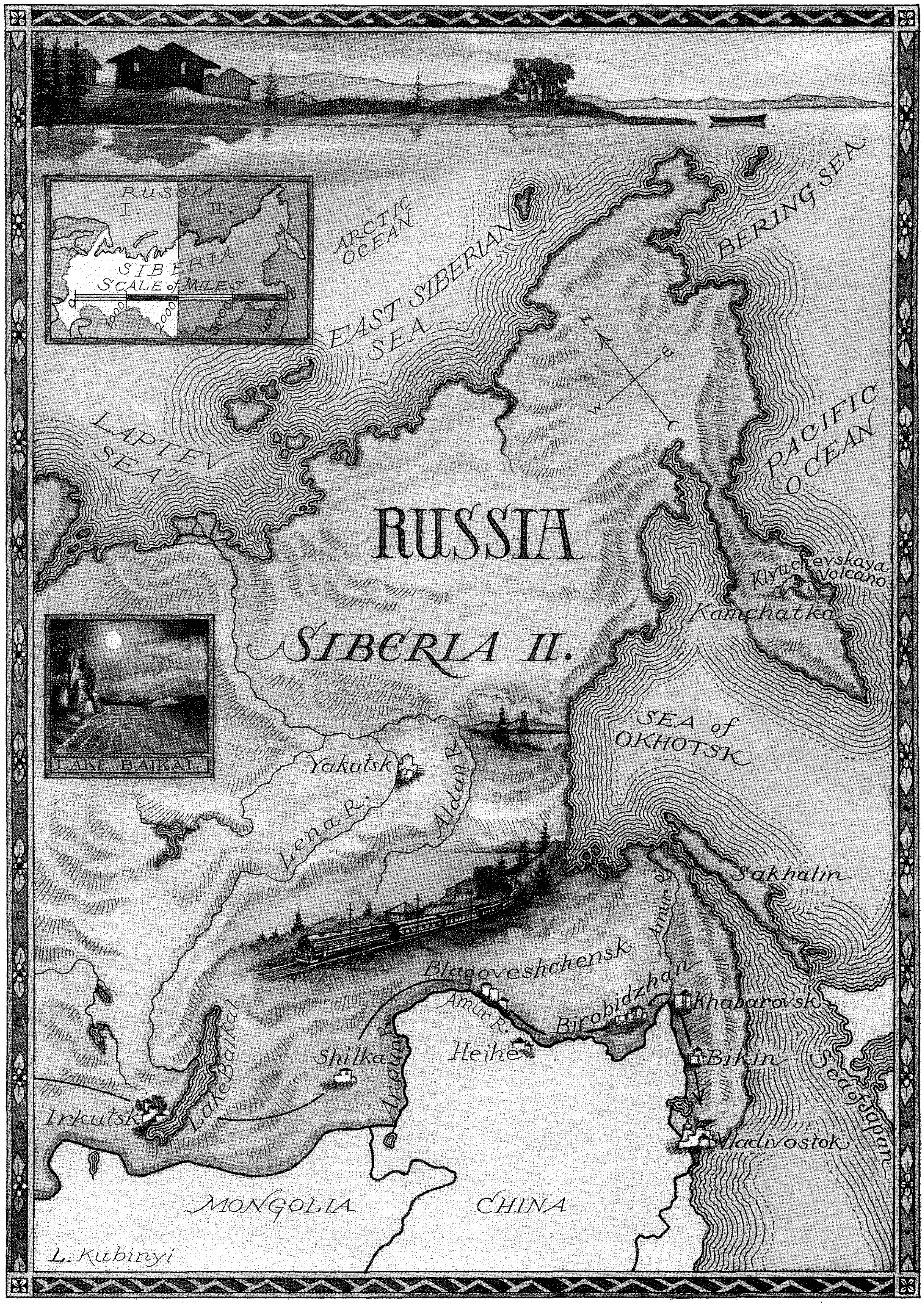
Martin's Pheasantry
Victoria Roberts

"Thanks, I'll write that down."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LAKE BAIKAL
SEA of OKHOTSK
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Aldan R.
Sakhalin
Amur R.
Blagoveshchensk
Amur R.
Birobidzhan
Khabarovsk
Shilka
Heihe
Argun R.
Bikin
Sea of Japan
Irkutsk
Lake Baikal
Vladivostok
MONGOLIA
CHINA
L. Kubinyi

The second half of the author's route, via Irkutsk, the onetime Paris of Siberia, and Lake Baikal to Vladivostok and the Pacific.

backed up each detail. I asked the aunt what her job was. "She's a philologist," the mother said. With matter-of-fact pride, the aunt nodded again.

At the berry patch, the mother showed me what they were picking—a small, round berry growing close to the ground on a plant with leaves like strawberry leaves. It looked like a holly berry and was very sour but sweet, with a big stone. There were thousands of them. The mother said its name was *kostyanika*. (The name means "stone berry.") She said they made a jam of it to put in tea.

As for her information about Yermak, later I read in a Russian chronicle from the late seventeenth century that the Cossack leader and his men, having fought one battle with the warriors of the Khan of Sibir, "sailed on the 8th day of June down the river Tobol, fighting and living on the alert. When they reached the landmark of Berezoviy Yar [!] a great battle was fought lasting many days. The infidels were like sheep rushing out of their folds but with God's help and the manifestation of heavenly hosts they too were defeated."

At Tobolsk, we saw the oldest stone fortress in Siberia, and the next days took us to and through the city of Omsk. I had been to Omsk twice before, but only at the airport. This city presented the usual row on row of crumbling high-rise apartment buildings, tall roadside weeds, smoky traffic, and blowing dust. For a moment, we passed an oasis scene—a crowded beach beside the Irtysh River, kids running into the water and splashing—before the urban grittiness resumed. Solzhenitsyn wrote in "The Gulag Archipelago" that he spent time in an ancient prison in Omsk that had once held Dostoyevsky, and that the prison's three-metre-thick stone walls and vaulted ceilings resembled a dungeon in a movie. I had wanted to explore Omsk looking for this prison, but forgot that idea entirely in our collective eagerness to get out of Omsk. We stopped just to buy groceries, then sped on.

A day beyond Omsk, the vastness of the Barabinsk Steppe stretched before us. For hours at a time, the land was so empty and unmarked that it was almost possible to imagine we weren't moving at all, and I often had trouble staying awake. Lenin himself had declared this a land "with a great future," but what I saw resembled more the blankness of eternity. And yet it was not like other flat places I've seen. The Great Plains of America tend to undulate more than this steppe does, and when the Plains are flat-flat, as in southwest Texas, they're also near-desert hardpan with only stunted brush and trees. On the Barabinsk Steppe, by contrast, stretches of real forest often appeared here and there, intruding into the flatland like the paws of a giant dog asleep just the other side of the horizon.

The villages now were fewer, and their names seemed to reach new levels of strangeness. In far-apart succession, we went through Klubnika (Strawberry), Sekty (Sects), and Chertokulich (hard to translate, but something like Devil Bread, according to Sergei). In the village of Kargat (meaning unknown, probably a Tatar word), we stopped for a break in the late afternoon. I sat in the van with the window open and my feet up, watching. First, a man went by on a motorcycle with a sidecar. In a few minutes, he passed by going in the other direction, with the sidecar now full of hay. A flock of sparrows burst from a cluster of bushes by the corner of a house with a noise like heavy rain. A moment later, a small hawk hopped from the bushes onto a nearby pile of firewood, looked around, hunched down, and flew off after them.

A motorcycle again came by with its sidecar full of hay. I looked closely. It was definitely not the same as the previous motorcycle. This motorcycle's driver was wearing an aviator's hat with goggles, and the sidecar was blue, not brown. As I considered that, a tall, shapely woman came walking from a long distance up the road. She wore a plain dress and had curly black hair. She passed the van and I smiled at her. She did not smile back. Then a beat-up car lurched into sight towing an even more beat-up car. As the cars came near I saw that they were connected back to front by a loop made of two seat belts buckled to each other. That was the only time I ever saw a Russian use a seat belt for any purpose at all.

TRAVELLING MUSIC

Now a short interlude of travelling music on the balalaika, and a few images from the road in no particular order, movie style:

Trash—The more of it I saw, the better I understood how it differs from American roadside trash. Russian trash has less paper. Paper plates and paper cups, especially, are almost never seen. The basic and most common item of Russian roadside trash is the hand-made plastic drinking cup, which is improvised on the spot by cutting off the bottom quarter or third of a plastic bottle that formerly contained water, soda, or beer. Some of these bottle-bottom cups are neatly trimmed at the lip, but most look ragged and slapdash. The sturdier ones are made from bottles with thicker sections of black plastic reinforcing their bases. After use, the cups are naturally left where they were created, along the road or at the picnic grounds. In more frequented parts of Siberia, from the Urals to the Pacific, you see these cups along the roads everywhere.

Ravens and Crows—For weeks as we drove, flocks of ravens and hooded crows remained a constant, ubiquitous in western Siberia no less than in St. Petersburg. The birds are easy to tell apart, because the ravens are all black, the hooded crows black and gray. On the Barabinsk Steppe, both kinds sometimes wheeled in great numbers that vivified the blank sky above the wide-open horizon. Past the city of Novosibirsk, however, it suddenly occurred to me that although I was still seeing ravens, I hadn't seen any hooded crows for a while. I began keeping a special watch for them, and did see a few stragglers. But after another few hundred kilometres no more hooded crows appeared.

Prisons—Sometimes I caught a glimpse of a prison, but invariably it went by too fast. Prisons cropped up in unexpected places on the outskirts of a city. Suddenly, I'd see a guard in boots carrying a machine gun and standing on a catwalk directly above an exercise yard. But always, it seemed, we were in traffic and couldn't stop. Outside Novosibirsk, I saw derelict guard towers, tumbledown buildings, and drooping barbed wire in a broad, open place beside the road. Whenever I pointed to such a site, Sergei and Volodya would say, "Military," without even turning their heads. My ongoing search for prisons did not sit well with either of them. After a while, I decided that pursuing it too much was impolite, and I let it drop for the time being.

Pigs—Although roaming herds of

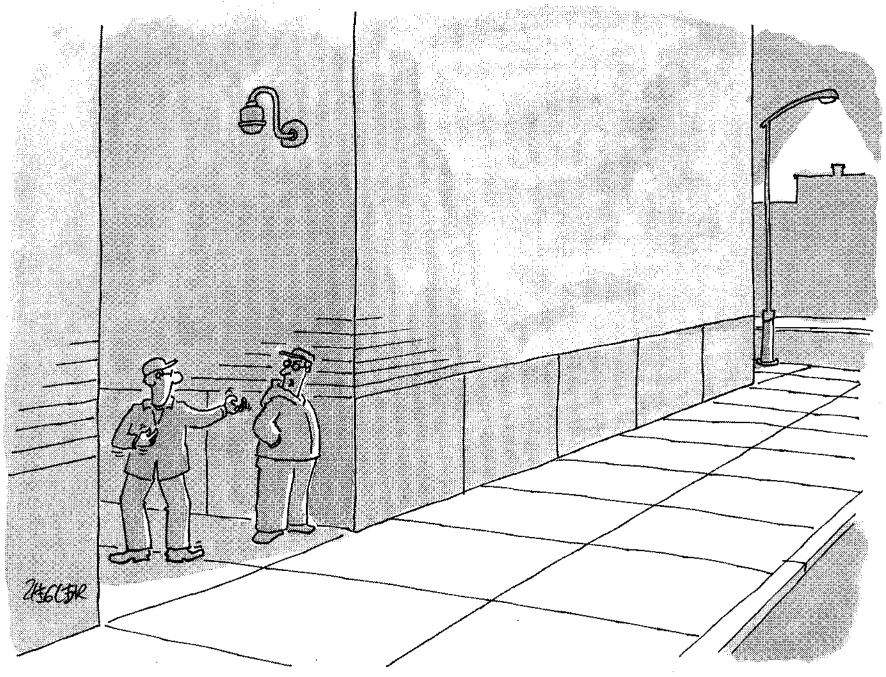
LASZLO KUBINYI

pigs were occasional in villages in western Siberia, east of Novosibirsk they became more common. Now every village we went through seemed to have big gangs of them. Because the weather was so hot, the pigs had generally been wallowing in a mudhole just before they got up to amble wherever we happened to see them ambling. Evidently, the wallowing technique of some pigs involved lying with just one side of themselves in the mud. This produced two-tone animals—pigs that were half wet, shiny brown mud, and half pink, relatively unsoiled original pig. The effect was striking—sort of harlequin. The other animals that roamed the villages in groups were geese. When a herd of pigs came face to face with a flock of geese, an unholy racket of grunting and gabbling would ensue. I wondered if the villagers ever got tired of the noise. Whether challenging pigs or not, the village geese seemed to gabble and yak and hiss nonstop. The pigs grunted and oinked almost as much, but always at some point the whole herd of pigs would suddenly fall silent, and their megaphone-shaped ears would go up, and for half a minute every pig would listen.

Birthplace of Volodya—About a half-day past Novosibirsk, we passed close by a town called Yashkino. Seeing it on our road map, Volodya remarked that he had been born there. His mother's people were originally from this area, he said. His father, a tank officer who had been stationed in the Far East at the end of the war, had met his mother while crossing Siberia on his way back to western Russia. Volodya was still a baby when he and his parents left Yashkino, so he had no memory of it; no relatives he knew of still lived there. He felt no need to go there.

Cottage Cheese—Called *tvorog* in Russian, this was a favorite lunch of Volodya's and Sergei's. Usually it could be obtained in very fresh supply from the grannies along the road. Sergei and Volodya especially liked their *tvorog* drenched in *smetana* ("sour cream"). I got to like it that way, too. Once or twice, we had *tvorog so smetanoi* not only for lunch but for a snack later in the day. The only drawback to this diet was that it made us smell like babies. And as we were able to bathe only infrequently our basic aroma became that of grownup, dusty, sweaty babies: the summertime smell of Mongols, in other words.

Talk Radio—There is talk radio in Russia just as in America, and call-in radio shows, and "shock jock" hosts who say outlandish things. Sergei and Volodya enjoyed listening to these shows sometimes. Usually I understood nothing that was said on the radio, except for one time when the host told a joke that Sergei and Volodya both laughed at. I picked out the word "Amerikantsi," so I knew the joke was about Americans. I asked them to tell me the joke, but they wouldn't. I kept bugging them, but Sergei said the joke was not important. Finally, when he was off doing something in the campsite, I asked Volodya about the joke again, and he told it to me. The joke was: "Why do American men want to be present when their wives are in childbirth?" Answer: "Because maybe they weren't present during conception."



"Seriously, dude, can we put the air guitar aside while we're lurking?"

SMOG

Until we left Novosibirsk, we had seen none of the large-scale environmental damage that Siberia is famous for. Then we hit the small, smoky city of Kemerovo, in the Kuznetsk Basin coal-mining region. Russians don't bother to hide strip mines with a screen of trees along the road to spare the feelings of motorists, as we Americans do. Beyond Kemerovo, the whole view at times became the gaping pits themselves, sprawling downward before us on either side while the thread-thin road tiptoed where it could between. Strip mines are strip mines, and I had seen similar scenery in North Dakota and southern Ohio and West Virginia, though never quite so close at hand. Often through this Siberian coal region the road strayed and forgot its original intention, and more than one fork we took dead-ended without warning at a city-size strip-mine hole. We meandered in the Kuznetsk Basin for most of a day and drove until past nightfall in order to camp on the other side.

After the Kuznetsk Basin came a long interval of meadows. We saw dark-clothed people working the hay fields in big groups as in an old bucolic painting, or riding to or from the work in horse-drawn flatbed wagons whose hard rubber wheels bouncing on the uneven pavement made the flesh of the passengers' faces jiggle fast. In this more peaceful region, we camped one night on the banks of the Chulym River at a popular spot with a gravel bank more convenient for bathing and washing than the usual swampy mud. While we ate supper, a group of Christians waded in not far from us, some of them in flowing white baptismal clothes. The worshippers sang songs accompanied by a guitar, held hands in a circle, swayed. A man in the middle of the circle took another man

"NOTHING YET, SIR, BUT WE HAVE FOUND ELVIS."

OWN THE ORIGINAL

"Nothing yet, sir, but we have found Elvis."
by Christopher Weyant
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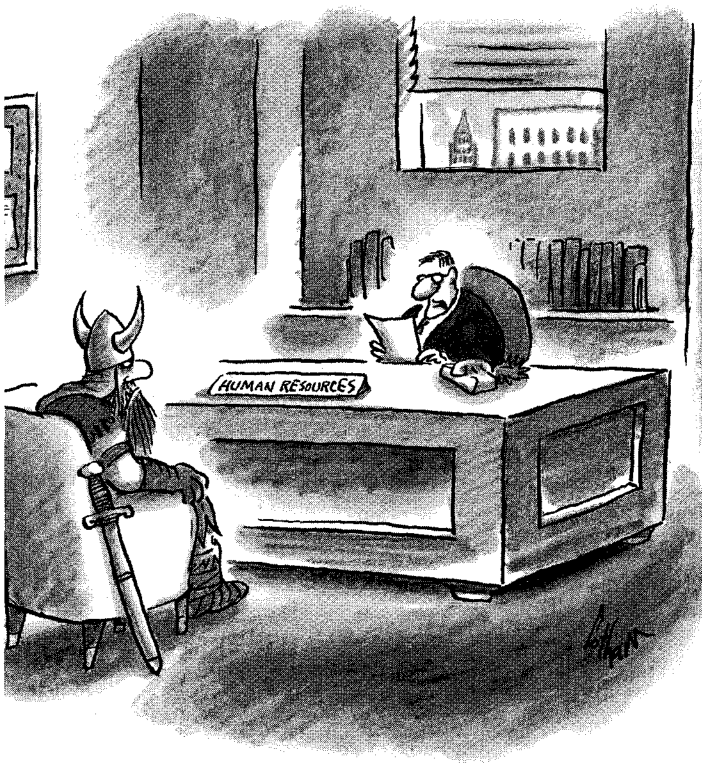

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distance, was only a thumbnail-size patch of the scene's immensity.

The long view also revealed that Krasnoyarsk puts out an impressive smoky haze of its own. During Soviet times, a lot of heavy industry relocated here. The first thing you see in the main hall of Krasnoyarsk's regional museum is a banner with a slogan intended to inspire Soviet factory workers during the Cold War. In large white letters on a red background, it reads, "Dogonim i Peregonim Ameriku!"—"We Will Catch Up With and Surpass America!"

The road got worse after Krasnoyarsk, and soon deteriorated thoroughly. Long unpaved sections with many big rocks and *yamy* made for a bumpy and dusty ride. The van's low clearance underneath, which I'd worried about before, now caused problems as we began to scrape, and we almost high-centered from time to time. A boulder in the path knocked away a foot or so of tailpipe. A worse bump on an uphill grade crushed and scraped away the remaining two or three feet, leaving no pipe extending from the muffler's outlet to carry off the exhaust fumes. Immediately, the air in the van, which had never been good, became unbearable. Now I could detect an actual blue fog. I tried to remember what the signs of monoxide poisoning were. Sergei, as expected, refused to go to a garage or muffler shop or do anything about the problem. That was not necessary, Sergei announced, sitting beside his open window and its plentiful incoming dust. Finally, Volodya, the swing vote among us, switched to my side and told Sergei that we had to fix the tailpipe right away or we'd all suffocate. Sergei said he would fix it, and with some annoyance he pulled over to the shoulder.

He got out. Volodya and I watched. Sergei was just wandering around a weedy patch of ground that paralleled the road, looking down and kicking occasionally at the dirt. After a minute or two, he bent over and stood up with something in his hand. It looked to be a piece of pipe. When we got out to see what he'd found, he showed us a somewhat rusty but still serviceable metre-long piece of tailpipe that must have fallen off another vehicle. It was exactly the same width as the one we'd lost. With Volodya's help, Sergei scooted under the van and wired the length of tailpipe in place at the muffler outlet and other points leading to the rear bumper. When we started driving again, the fumes were much better, though not by any means gone. Still, I had to praise Sergei for what an ingenious guy he was.

Beyond Krasnoyarsk, the road also began to run closer to the tracks of the Trans-Siberian Railway, crossing it over and back from time to time. Each crossing was watched over by a guard in a small shed. When the guard, usually a short, stout woman, saw a train coming, she would walk into the road, wave a flag to stop the cars, and lower the barricades. If the train was a long and slow one, as many were, the people in the waiting cars would unpackage drinks and snacks, throw their doors open, stretch their legs out, and get comfortable. After the train had gone by, the guard would walk onto the tracks, look both ways to make sure all was safe, raise the barricades, and wave the cars through with her flag. At regularly spaced intervals on the road, piles of snack remains showed where each car had been.

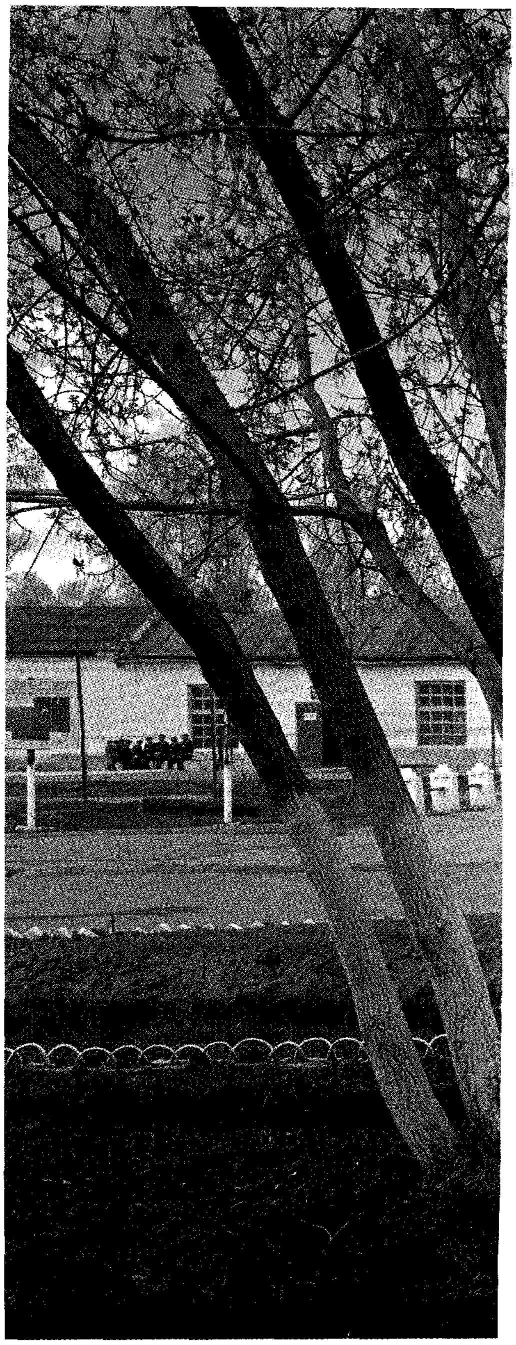
Sometimes in the evening we camped not far from the tracks. During lulls in the train traffic, I climbed up the stones of the roadbed and looked down the rails to where they disappeared around a distant bend. As on the old Sibirskii Trakt, phantoms thronged along the railway. I pictured the flag-bedecked, celebratory trains that passed by here when the railway was first completed, in tsarist times, and the soldiers of the Czech Legion in their slow-moving armored trains in 1919, and the White Army soldiers dying of typhus by the thousands along the route, and the slave laborers who laid the second set of tracks in the nineteen-thirties, and the countless sealed Stolypin cars of prisoners dragged along these tracks to the deadly Gulag camps of the Soviet Far East. Osip Mandelstam, the great poet, on his way to death at the Second River transit prison in Vladivostok, had gone along this line. The ties and the steel rails and the overhead catenary wires all leading determinedly eastward still had a certain grimness, as if permanently blackened by history.

THE DECEMBRISTS

On the afternoon of August 27th, we reached Irkutsk, the onetime Paris of Siberia. Since leaving St. Petersburg, we had been on the road for twenty-two days.

Among the first places we went in Irkutsk was the house (now a museum) built in 1854 for Prince Sergei Trubetskoy. He was one of the leaders of the revolutionaries whose failed uprising of December 14, 1825, earned them the name Decembrists. Their plan, not thoroughly thought out, was to depose the tsar and establish a constitutional form of government; when the moment for action came, they collectively balked. Had the coup succeeded, Trubetskoy was supposed to become the country's interim dictator. Many of his comrades saw him as a George Washington figure. By logic, after the movement was crushed Trubetskoy should have been among the ones hanged. The loftiness of his family—in nobility, the Trubetskoys ranked just below the tsar—and the fact that his mother was a lady-in-waiting to the tsarina no doubt saved his life.

Like many other Decembrists, Trubetskoy was sent to Siberia. His wife, Ekaterina, followed him into exile. For twelve years, he served his sentence of hard labor in prison settlements east of Lake Baikal, and in 1839 he was allowed to relocate with his family nearer to Irkutsk, where he later moved and built this house. Though it may have been one of the grander houses of Irkutsk in its day, it is not overly fancy, but suggests instead the elegance of curtailed excess and of cultured taste making the best of materials at hand. The house has a brick foundation supporting smoothly joined logs that have been planed square and fitted together horizontally. Single-story wings on either side balance a central, peaked-roof section that rises to a tall second story. The over-all effect is of an eccentric Greek-revival style married to the skill and intricacy of Russian-village



A prison in the Krasnoyarsk region. All along

MAGNUM

the route, prisons cropped up in unexpected places on the outskirts of a city. Photograph by Carl De Keyzer.

woodworking. I thought I'd never seen a better-looking house. I wanted to find out what it was like inside, but unfortunately it was closed for renovation when we were there.

A block away is another Decembrist house-museum. It was the house of Sergei Volkonsky, whose nobility of birth equalled Trubetskoy's. The Volkonsky family descended from a prince, later a saint of the Orthodox Church, who fought the Mongols in the thirteenth century; Sergei Volkonsky's mother, Aleksandra Repnina, also happened to be the tsar's mother's highest-ranking lady-in-waiting and closest friend. Like Ekaterina Trubetskaya, Maria, the young wife of Sergei Volkonsky, voluntarily shared his exile. Nekrasov's poem "Russian Women," in praise of the Decembrist wives, compared Maria Volkonskaya to a saint. Pushkin rhapsodized that her hair was more lustrous than daylight and darker than night. Tolstoy, whose mother was a Volkonsky, and who came from the generation that followed the Decembrists, thought so highly of Sergei Volkonsky that he is said to have based Prince Andrei Bolkonsky in "War and Peace" on him and to have used the letters and journals that Volkonsky wrote during the Napoleonic Wars in creating the character.

The Volkonsky house-museum is large and imposing, in a Russian château style, though it's not a work of art like the Trubetskoys'. Its exhibits consist mainly of portraits and photographs of the Volkonsky family and the families of other Decembrists. The elderly lady guide who took us through gave us the biographical details of everybody. Zinaida Trubetskaya, born to Sergei and Ekaterina in Siberia in 1837, survived to 1924, long enough to receive a government pension granted by Lenin himself in honor of her revolutionary father. Among the ancillary characters, the museum also displayed the only picture I'd ever come across of Georges-Charles D'Anthès, the French Army officer and ballroom roué who killed Pushkin in a duel. Had there been matinée idols in D'Anthès's day, he could have been one, with his wavy blond hair.

For a while, Tolstoy planned to write a book about the Decembrists, but he set the idea aside because all official papers relating to them were in secret archives and thus unavailable for his research. After the revolution of 1905, when documents withheld under the tsars became accessible, Tolstoy was seventy-seven years old and no longer able to take on such a big project. Why the Decembrists interested him is easy to grasp. Though their revolution fell apart and though their punishment was a humiliation and a waste, the Decembrists were inspiring nonetheless. Of the hundred and some Decembrists found most culpable by the Committee of Inquiry that followed the suppression of the uprising, only ten were over forty years old. Almost all the Decembrists were of the same youthful generation in 1825; and if I had to pick one generation as the greatest in Russian history theirs would be it. Alexander Herzen hailed the Decembrists as "a perfect galaxy of brilliant talent, independent character, and chivalrous valor—a combination new to Russia." Of those declared the most dangerous—in other words, the most prominent among them—the greater number lived out their lives imprisoned or exiled in Siberia.

Irkutsk does kind of look like Paris, it turns out—if you can imagine a Paris with the Seine gigantically expanded to the horizon-filling width of Irkutsk's Angara, and with diminished buildings and steeples poking up along the river's distant margins on either side. We drove down the Street of the Events of December, we parked, we bought supplies. But the afternoon had got late, and Sergei, as usual, was in a sweat to escape the city limits and find a good camping spot. He said he knew of an ideal place on the shores of Lake Baikal, fifty or sixty kilometres away. Before we set out for it, I stipulated that we return to Irkutsk the following morning; there was more here I wanted to see.

Sergei's camping spot was in a little regional park above the fishing town of Nikola. Centuries ago, eastbound travellers used to stop there and pray at the chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas for safe passage across the lake. The park is on a hillside, and as Sergei navigated the van up its incline he made a sharp turn that came within a breath of tipping the vehicle onto its side. He then stopped, backed down, found a less steep route, drove to the campsite, and set up the tents without comment. This was the first "improved" campsite we had been in. Each site had a fire circle surrounded by stones, an iron grate for cooking, and two benches made of wood.

Sergei and Volodya spent the next morning climbing the cliffs above Baikal. Sergei said that these cliffs were so beautiful I must see them immediately. After lunch he led me there. We climbed past the camp and well beyond the village to a point where pale, columnar cliffs rose spirelike above. Single file, we started up. The rock had interstices and eroded places through which a handbreadth of trail snaked, mostly along the side closest to the water. I admired Sergei's quick footwork; mine was more uncertain, and at one or two places I got down on all fours. Lake Baikal, immensely blue, occupied the entire space on our right-hand side clear to the horizon. At the top of a spire, we stopped, and there, directly below us, maybe fifteen stories down, a naked couple was swimming in water of a clear, almost tropical greenish-blue. We could hear the woman laugh; her figure was Rubensian. In another moment, they ducked into a grotto, maybe realizing we were there.

Seen close up, the city of Irkutsk (when we returned to it) resembled the Baikal cliffs' ancient and weather-beaten windings. During its early years, Irkutsk had grown unplanned, like coral, and when civic improvement tried to bring some order to the confusion the crews sent out for that purpose sometimes sawed houses in half to make crooked streets straight. In much of the city, they still aren't. A sense of almost microscopic embroidery fills the town's windingest lanes, where log homes sunk halfway to their eaves in the permafrost draw your attention with decorative woodcarving on shutters and doors and windows as ornate as the finest carved birch jewelry box. And yet almost every house also looked gray and older than old, though never as decrepit as the defiantly ugly high-rises that confront you whenever a big open space from Soviet times scissors across the network of lanes.

Elsewhere on my Irkutsk ramblings, I came across the graves of Ekaterina Trubetskaya and three of her children at Znamenskii Monastery. In the first years of the Decembrists' imprisonment, Katya Trubetskaya had been everybody's morale-builder, with her good humor and levelheadedness, but after her children began to die and her own health failed she became indifferent to life, and she died about two years before the amnesty declared by Tsar Alexander II, on the occasion of his coronation, in 1856. Her death stunned her husband; when he went back to western Russia, he said goodbye forever to her grave.

In advertisements posted around the city, I also noticed that Admiral Kolchak, the White Army leader whose attempt to overthrow the Bolsheviks ended in Irkutsk with his capture and execution, is now a beer. Admiral Kolchak Beer is brewed locally. I picked up an empty bottle of it that I found. The label has a portrait of the Admiral in his white naval uniform and even provides the history-minded beer drinker with a brief bio, which plays up his heroism in the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War, his polar explorations, and his improvement of the Russian Navy, but makes no mention of his violent exit. A beer garden on Irkutsk's Angara riverfront sports a long striped awning with the Kolchak Beer logo repeated prominently all along it; maybe the awning is within sight of the place where the corpse of the unlucky Admiral was shoved through the ice back in 1920.

THE MOON ROAD

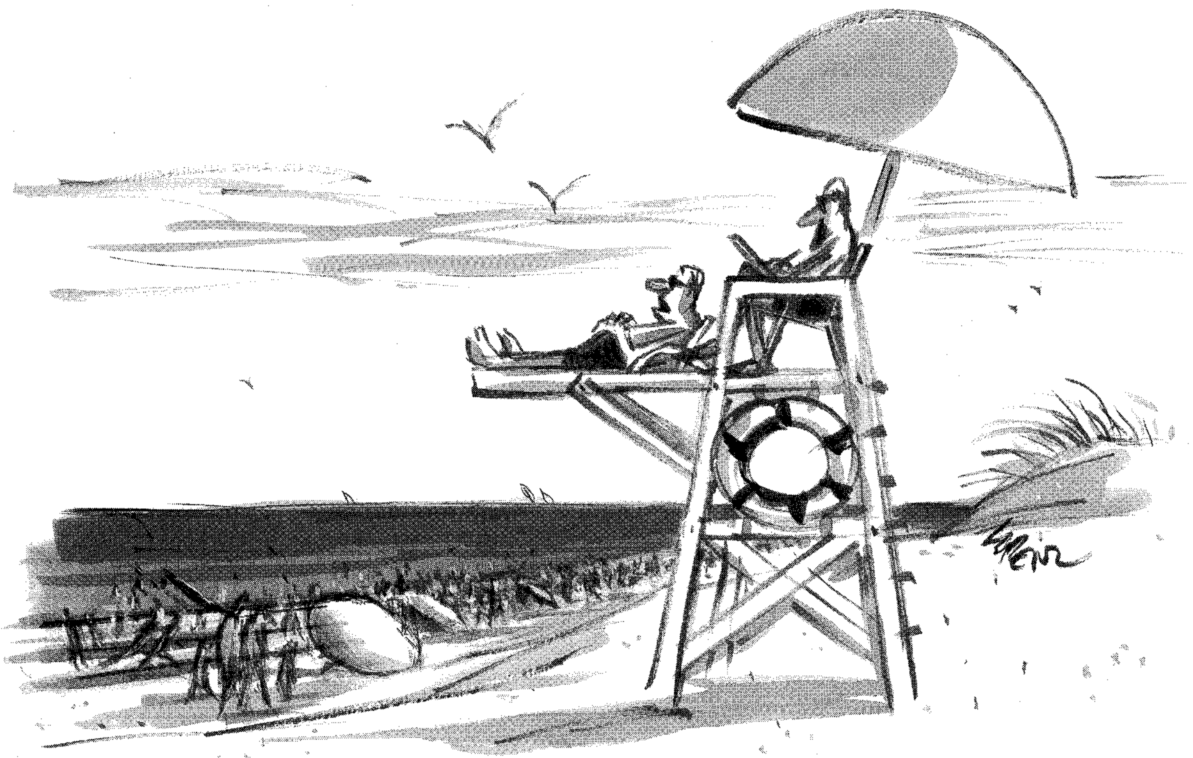
That night, we again slept near the shores of Baikal. This time, owing to bad planning, we camped on the grounds of what was billed as a resort. It had a gate, cabins, picnic shelters, and washroom conveniences best left undiscussed. Its strewn heaps of trash were extreme, even for Russia. Somebody who saw this campground without context or explanation might come to the conclusion that a group of confused people had mistakenly gone on vacation at the town dump. We met a woman who "provided touristic services" at the resort, and she had been driven to a near-frenzy by how awful it was. This became evident when Sergei invited her to have tea with us after supper, and she told us, with great drama and forcefulness and scorching irony, about the difficulties of her job. By one o'clock, her monologue had worn me out and I retired to my tent. Sergei had to evict her bodily at two-thirty. At an even later hour than that, when he and Volodya were again off somewhere, I came awake to a loud conversation between two passing drunks who were debating whether to do something or other—I did not recognize the verb—to our tents. Fortunately, the milder of the drunks prevailed after a while, and they went away. Cars then blasted up and down the resort's dirt lanes for an hour or so, blowing their horns. Just after dawn, the Big Brother-like speakers of the public-address system wired to nearby trees began playing bad music from many different cultures while exhorting everyone to get up and exercise.

Sergei assured me that he would find us a better place on Baikal, and the next day he did. We drove around the southern end of the lake and then followed the railroad tracks that ran between the road and the shore. At a place where a creek went under a railroad bridge, there was enough dry ground on one side for the van to squeak through, and we emerged onto a beach of small, smooth rocks with no sign of people anywhere for three or four kilometres. Sitting on the beach with nothing to do but look at the lake, I finally got the point about Baikal.

I knew that it's the largest body of fresh water in the world, that it contains about twenty per cent of the world's fresh water, that it's 1,637 metres (more than a mile) deep at its deepest, that it was created by continental landmasses moving apart, that it has species of animals found only here. But, beyond its facts, Baikal really does have a magic to it. Travellers who wrote ecstatically about it in the past were not exaggerating. Most of Russia's inland water is sluggish, swampy, inert; Baikal's is quick. For sparklingness and clarity it's the opposite of swamp water. The surrounding hills and cliffs that funnel winds along it keep it jumping. It reflects like an optical instrument and responds to changes in the weather so sensitively that it seems like a part of the sky rather than of the land.

When a wave rolls in on Baikal, and it curls to break, you can see stones on the bottom refracted in the vertical face of the wave. This glimpse, offered for just a moment in the wave's motion, is like seeing into the window of an apartment as you go by it on an elevated train. The moon happened to be full that night, and after it rose the stones on the bottom of the lake lay spookily illuminated in the moonlight. The glitter of the moon on the surface of the lake—the "moon road," Sergei called it—fluctuated constantly in its individual points of sparkling, with a much higher definition than any murky water could achieve. Light glitters differently on water this clear. I understood that I had never really seen the moon reflected on water before.

This camping spot was so great we decided to stay another day. True, trains did go by almost constantly just the other side of some shoreline trees; but the sound was not bad for sleeping at all. In the morning, a fisherman who put his boat in at the mouth of the creek brought us some *omul'* he had just caught. (The *omul'* is Baikal's tastiest fish.) To reciprocate, I opened a stash of presents I had brought along and got out a New York City snow globe, some Beanie Baby stuffed animals, and two folding pocket mirrors to give to him.



AUGUST ON THE CAPE

He liked the snow globe and he accepted the Beanie Babies, but he gave me back the mirrors, saying he had no use for them. This made Sergei indignant and he scolded the guy for being a rude person who didn't know how to behave with foreigners. Chastened, the guy took the mirrors. I remembered I had a baseball cap with the logo of the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society on it—the logo shows a leaping bass, in bright green—and I gave him that cap, too. He put it on and examined it in the mirror, and above his broad face and brown bib overalls it looked exactly right. I liked the idea that I had successfully launched a B.A.S.S. hat on the waters of Baikal.

GHOSTS

They bring with them a coldness, as tradition demands,
and a light, dry odor of rot
much like worm in wood, and bring a chorus of cries

to fill the air as if it were birdsong, and bring in their open hands
tokens of themselves, a letter, a snapshot,
and bring some trace of their point of departure, a smudge

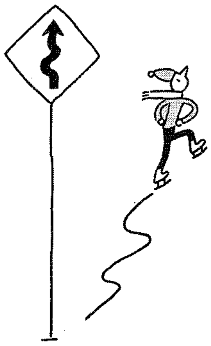
on the shoe, a stain on the sleeve, and bring the disguise
they lived under, stitched with their names,
hoping you'll give them the nod, hoping you'll recognize

something, perhaps, of the old times, the fun and games,
while they shuffle up as if they stood on the edge
of night so a nudge would tip them over, and bring

a dew of death that settles on picture frames,
on pelmets, on clothes in the closet, on books,
on your eyelash, to make a prism through which you get

Of the four hundred and thirty-seven rivers that are said to flow into Baikal (only one, the Angara, flows out), the Selenga is the principal stream coming from the south. Its origins are in the steppes of Mongolia. Genghis Khan made his capital, Karakorum, near a Selenga tributary called the Orkhon. The Selenga was the most authentic-looking Siberian river I'd encountered so far. Up to now I'd seen swampy rivers and ones bordered by mountains and trees; the bare hills along the banks of the Selenga and the wide-screen vistas of river and open country spoke of Asian steppes expanding to the southeast. Again, the fencelessness of the land amazed me. At a place where wheel tracks led through the sparse brown grasses beside the highway we drove down a hillside and stopped beside the Selenga to make that evening's camp.

The fact that the wheel tracks ended at the edge of the river should have tipped us off that this was a ferry crossing. We didn't notice that until the tents had been pitched; then, from the other side of the Selenga, arose the sharp rat-a-tat of an unmuffled engine whose sky-filling volume seemed out of proportion to the little craft that was its cause. In another few minutes, the sound came nearer, as a short, stubby power launch angled across the current with a small fenced raft in tow. On the raft sat a truck of the kind that carries troops, its box back enclosed by an awning. The launch approached the shore and then executed a neat, sharp turn that swung the towrope and the ferry raft at its end into an unfurling arc that ended with the front of the raft wedged against the shore. Someone undid the raft's gate and the truck drove off onto the bank, and a dozen or so passengers jumped from the raft into the back of the truck. It revved its engine smokily for a few minutes and then motored away.



Meanwhile, a few cars had arrived to go aboard for the return trip. I pointed out to Sergei that this traffic was likely to continue into the night, so maybe moving camp would be a good idea. A chronic fear I have of being run over while asleep in my tent had begun to flare up. Sergei replied that we had nothing at all to worry about, and, not wanting to be difficult, I went along. In fact the traffic did keep coming and going until late, and began again just at dawn, but its orderly rhythms didn't trouble me. I even found them comforting, somehow.

While Volodya was fixing supper, I went a distance down the bank and sat on a camp chair and admired the view. To the north, or downstream, the river spread so far from bank to bank that it seemed more like a landlocked sea. Facing that way, I did a sketch of the river and of the ferry launch arriving. In the other direction, upstream, a rock cliff came down to the water and cut off the vista that was beyond. I hiked a bit to get a look around the cliff and discovered only more cliffs and hills, and a narrowed river slipping out of sight among them.

In that direction—south—lay China. Our route here didn't lead toward it but veered away from the river and to the northeast. We spent the next day climbing out of the Selenga watershed through hilly country of mixed taiga and steppe. The many hilltop vantage points revealed one view after another, with endless uplands and ridges and low mountains; Sergei kept stopping and getting out to sweep the video camera slowly across the scene. Many trees in this part were dead and gray, I assumed from some infestation or disease. At first, I thought the cause might be the pine beetle, as in similar forest die-offs in North America, but I saw many dead birches, too.

Now we were passing fewer cars, people, or villages than at any previous stretch of the trip. I had rarely seen country this unused and empty anywhere. At midday, we stopped in a village called Desyatnikovo to buy potatoes. An old woman there told us that this was an Old Believer village, but it was dying. (Old Believers are dissenters from the Orthodox Church; many of them have sought refuge in Siberia since the seventeenth century.) She said that houses with the shutters closed meant

a broken image of what must be a stage set
of the Peaceable Kingdom, a front
for that place you only ever find in dreams,

its undrinkable rivers, its scrubland of snarls and hooks,
horizons gone askew,
beasts hamstrung and walking on their hocks,

and bring their long-lost hopes, which they lay at your feet
then stand back, stand apart,
hairless, soft-skinned, their eyes bright blue

like the eyes of the newborn, and bearing a look
of matchless sorrow, as would, for sure,
stop the heart of whoever it is they take you for.

—*David Harsent*

that no one lived there now and the people who used to live there had died. The woman showed us her own house, a bright-painted cabin of trimmed logs on the central street with shuttered houses on either side. She seemed to be in permanent mourning and told us she was very sad. A somewhat younger guy we bought potatoes from said that only old people lived in the village nowadays. There is no work, so young people move away, he said.

We kept climbing, descending, climbing again. One hilltop overlooked a span of the Trans-Siberian Railway on which a train consisting entirely of black oil-tanker cars stretched as far as one could see, west to east; it must have been four kilometres long. At about three o'clock in the afternoon, Sergei informed me that, according to the map, we had just crossed the divide between the watershed of central Siberia and the basin of the Amur River. The M55 highway goes over this divide near the village of Tanga. From that point, the road began to descend until it dropped into the broad valley of the Ingoda River—a familiar name. When the Decembrists were imprisoned in Chita, they bathed in the Ingoda.

In late afternoon, we found a good place to camp on its banks. The Ingoda is a pleasant, small river with a brisk flow and a bottom of sand and gravel in the parts I saw. Some boys near our campsite who came by to check us out told Sergei you could catch plenty of fish in it using crickets. I set up my fly rod and tied on an all-around attractor fly. Casting into slack water below some riffles, I got a lot of splashy strikes, but the fish were too small to fit their mouths around the fly. Finally, I hooked a flipping and flopping six-incher. It had delicate yellow markings on its side, like little reef fish I'd caught in Florida. I don't know what kind of fish it was.

I showed it to Volodya and he said he'd fry it up for an appetizer before supper. Then I waded back into the river and cast some more. Far downstream, I knew, the Ingoda joined the Onon to make the Shilka, which joined the Argun to make the Amur, which eventually emptied into the Pacific, which extended all the way to Dockweiler State Beach, in Los Angeles, where my sister-in-law brought her children to swim. In theory, from here I could take the all-water route home.

THE VAGON

The following afternoon, we reached Chernyshevsk, an important point on our journey. I had been half dreading Chernyshevsk, because beyond it the road became undrivably bad for the next eight hundred or nine hundred kilometres. Owing to the swamps and the lack of local population and the difficulty of maintenance, from Chernyshevsk to the town of Magdagachi, a long way to the east, there was in effect no vehicle road. Therefore, all cross-country drivers had to stop in Chernyshevsk (or, if westbound, in Magdagachi) and load their vehicles onto Trans-Siberian car- and truck-carriers in order to traverse the roadless stretch by rail.

This situation had created a bottleneck at Chernyshevsk, where traffic backed up like leaves in a storm drain. The place was really just a village beside a large Trans-Siberian Railway train yard, and it offered travellers—who routinely had to wait forty-eight hours before an available transport appeared—almost no lodgings, no bathroom facilities you would want to enter without protective gear, and almost no restaurants. Meanwhile, the trucks and cars kept arriving.

Late in the afternoon, a train hauling vehicle transports arrived from the east. The transports carried used Japanese cars, most of them Toyotas, with their front ends covered in masking tape, like bandaged noses, to protect from flying gravel on the road. So far, I have not described this important aspect of Siberian trade: throughout the year, but especially in the summer, guys ride the Trans-Siberian to Vladivostok, buy used Japanese cars there, and drive the cars west across Siberia for resale. Cargo ships full of these vehicles arrive in Vladivostok all the time. A used car bought in Vladivostok for two thousand dollars can be resold farther west in Russia for three times that much. The guys who drive this long-distance shuttle tend to wear muscle shirts, shiny Adidas sweatpants, and running shoes, and their short, pale haircuts stand up straight in a bristly Russian way. On the road, they are easy to recognize by the tape on their vehicles and by the fact that they speed like madmen. The faster they finish each round trip, the more trips they can do and the more money they can make.

One of the drivers debarking in Chernyshevsk told Sergei that this load of cars and drivers had had to wait five days in Magdagachi for transports, and then spent forty-eight hours on the train. In Chernyshevsk, the unloading was done one car at a time. Some of the drivers, when they finally did emerge with their vehicles onto the cracked pavement of the Chernyshevsk parking lot, shifted into neutral and raced their engines in automotive howls of liberation or rage. The emergence of each vehicle caused a crowd of begging children to swarm around it. Some drivers honked and yelled at the kids to go away; others rolled their windows partway down and held out little pieces of leftover food. I saw a girl with large hoop earrings trot to a window and snatch the back end of a kielbasa that a driver offered her.

At about ten-thirty that night, the stationmaster, a blocky woman with dyed red hair, a Dalmatian-spotted blouse, and an orange workman's vest, appeared among the vehicles and told us all that there would be no train tonight. Nor would there necessarily be one tomorrow, she added, with keen enjoyment disguised as nonchalance. The quiet way she savored giving out this disappointing news was a wonder to see. Maybe a train would come along tomorrow night, she speculated; but, then again, maybe it would not.

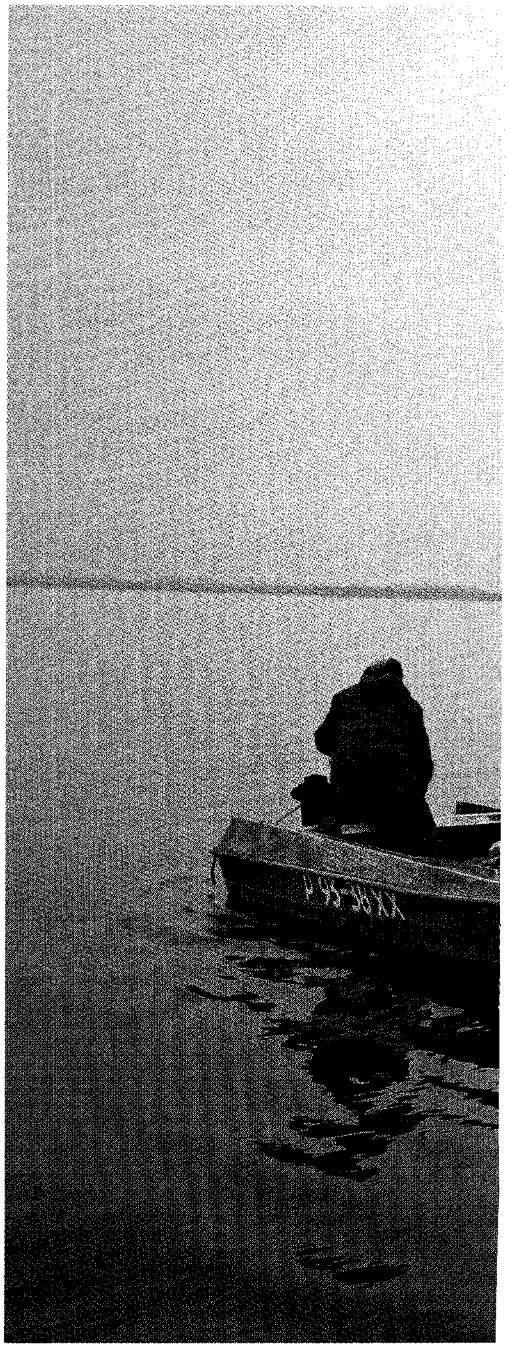
As we considered the prospect of spending the night in Chernyshevsk in the van, Sergei again showed his mastery of difficult situations. By distributing a small amount of cash to the drivers immediately in front of and behind us, he held our place for tomorrow. Then he backed out of the queue, sped away from Chernyshevsk, and found us a place to camp beside a quiet and clear and relatively un-trashed stream a few kilometres outside town. We set up the tents, ate supper by lantern light, and turned in for a good sleep. In the morning, I took out my fly rod and caught a couple of little fish in the stream. Volodya made breakfast, then drove to Chernyshevsk to monitor what was going on. He returned in haste, saying the train was about to leave and we must get back there *begom*—"at a run."

The train was not about to leave, as it turned out. To my surprise, though, it did seem to have arrived. We spent another afternoon in the vehicle queue waiting to load. I had understood that we would be going on a vehicle transport, the usual open-air affair, where we would just sort of hang out like train-hopping hoboes until we reached Magdagachi. But Sergei had something better in mind. He had heard about a guy who had his own train car. The guy, a short, dark-haired, bushy-eyebrowed, villainous-looking party, appeared at the loading ramp surrounded by a small entourage. Yes, he did have his own *vagon*—a long, windowless boxcar with room inside for four ordinary-sized vehicles. The guy's *vagon* represented the high end of Chernyshevsk vehicle transports. Sergei negotiated with the guy to insure that our van would be one of the lucky four, and the guy agreed, for two hundred dollars.

Then our van was locked in the guy's *vagon* for a few hours while the train made up its mind about leaving, and we had to fend for ourselves in the Chernyshevsk train station with no vehicle to retreat to. I just kept moving, strolling and taking evasive action so as not to be swarmed on. Finally, we were let into the *vagon* and it somehow got hooked up to the train; and later, hours later, sprawled in the van, I felt the first few blessed inchings of forward motion. When a conveyance you are riding in fails to move and fails to move, and you hope and pray and apply all your mental powers in an attempt to get it rolling, and it finally does move, that's one of life's sweetest feelings. When the train at last left the yards after all that time in Chernyshevsk, I relaxed as if the sedative had finally reached my veins.

The *vagon's* luxuries did not include interior lighting. Small planes of daylight came through narrow slots at the top of what might once have been windows; otherwise the space was completely sealed. Once darkness had fallen, everything in the *vagon* grew dim, except at the front end, where a glow came from an open door. Inside the door, the guy who owned the *vagon*—its *khozyain*, as he repeatedly instructed me to call him—occupied a sort of stateroom.

Past his room was a small between-cars passageway with doors on either side that opened at the top so you could look out. This place was great for fresh air, an antidote for the claustrophobia of the *vagon*. The *khozyain* kept his stateroom door open, and as I went by he would hail me, "Hey, comrade writer!" Sometimes we had short conversations. Generally, he was drinking vodka from a large bottle while lying on a bed that fit into the stateroom's corner. Beside him lay a blond woman so large and rumpled she seemed to be part bed herself. A TV sat on a shelf opposite them playing a Russian movie, and they were passing back and forth a sunflower blossom the size of a party pizza, pulling seeds from the blossom's center and chewing them and spitting the shells into cups.



Fishermen on the Amur River, which forms the

VII NETWORK

On every trip there is a hump that must be got over, a central knot to be worked through. For us that knot pulled tight in the Chernyshevsk-Magdagachi part of our journey.

Being sealed in the *vagon* soon got to me. I mean, here were four vehicles parked inches apart in a closed space, maybe twenty gallons of gas in each vehicle; and there were no windows, no fire extin-

border between Russia and China for about sixteen hundred kilometres, before heading northeast to the Pacific. Photograph by Seamus Murphy.

guishers on the walls, no "Exit" signs, the *vagon's* back doors secured tightly from the outside. . . . Safety is never the Russians' primary concern. Meanwhile, the guy in charge of the *vagon* is drunk and watching TV. Of course, I understood that there was no point in mentioning any of this to anybody.

Besides our van, the *vagon* carried two Japanese-made S.U.V.s driven by families on their way back to their home cities in the Sakha Republic, in northeastern Siberia, after their summer vacations. One family consisted of a hard-drinking dentist and his fourteen-year-old daughter, Kira. The other family was a mother and father, a young son, and a fourteen-year-old daughter named Olya. The two girls lived far apart and had never met. They hung out together in the passageway and talked, and when they found out I was from America they had a lot of questions for me, mostly about Jewel (the singer), Sylvester Stallone, and the Hard Rock Cafe. Both girls said that Yakutsk, the capital of the Sakha Republic, was a really boring place. Olya gave me a piece of paper with her address and wrote "Write to me!" all over it; naturally, I lost it soon afterward. At one point, I was sitting in the van and I took a nervous look behind us—making sure no wisps of smoke were rising, signs of coming inferno—and Olya happened to sit up in the front seat of her car where she'd been napping, and she smiled at me so beautifully that all my malaise lifted for a while.

The guy in the fourth car, a Russian vehicle right in front of the van, was a scuba diver. He said that he worked on oil platforms and also gathered shellfish off the coast of Sakhalin Island, to which he was returning. He was wiry-haired and ruddy and he wore a vest of black leather. With other people and by himself, he drank vodka night and day. Our first morning in the *vagon*, after I'd slept pretty well on the front seat of the van complicatedly propped between the door and the steering wheel, I woke, sat up, and rubbed my eyes. The scuba diver woke at the exact same moment and got out of his vehicle rubbing his eyes. He saw me, broke into a huge grin, and made the "Do you want a shot of vodka?" gesture, tapping his throat below the jaw with a flip of his fingers. From his car he pulled a half-full bottle of vodka to show me. I shook my head no politely; it was about eight in the morning.

Quietly, I slid from the van and went to the passageway for a look outside. The sun had risen on a cool, clear day in early fall. Our train was making a steady thirty kilometres (about twenty m.p.h.) through taiga mixed with hay fields. During the night, a heavy frost had covered the countryside. It rimed the leaves of the birch trees, some of which had already turned yellow, and made the needles and knobby branches of a tree I took to be a larch a soft white. At this speed, I could see the trackside weeds, curved like shepherds' crooks by the spiderwebs attached to them, the frost on the web strands glistening in the sun. When the tracks went around a bend, the rest of the train was revealed extending far ahead. Our *vagon* was the second-to-last car. A broad hay field we passed had just been cut. The short stubble, all frost-white, lay like carpet among the haystacks spaced regularly across it. In the cool morning air, the top of every haystack was steaming, and each wisp of steam leaned eastward, the direction we were going.

All day the train moseyed on. During stretches where the track was really bad, it slowed to walking speed. It stopped, it started, it waited on sidings, started again, stopped. In the *vagon,* a temporary lobotomy seemed to have levelled everybody. Sometimes as the train sat awhile at a station I got out and walked around, never wandering too far, from fear of being left. Every station I observed was dark, cracked, in the process of being colonized by weeds, and with the lights of its platform broken.

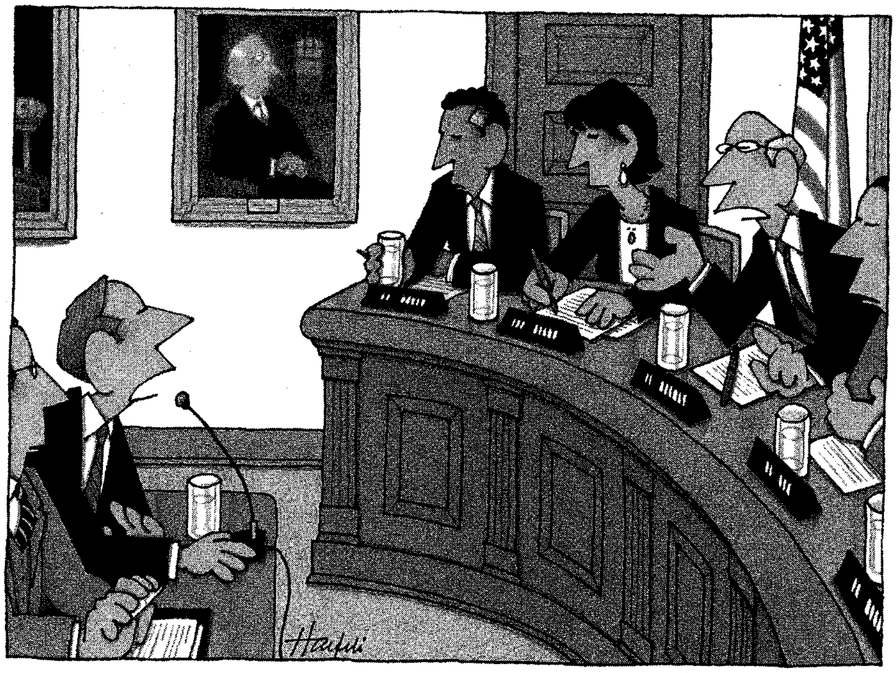
People thronged the stations nonetheless—old ladies selling *pirozhki* (small pies of cabbage or meat or mushroom), skinny guys with big bottles of foamy, off-color beer, girls displaying boxes made of birch and carved wooden shoes on pieces of carpet, vodka sellers with their bottles lined up in rows on folding card tables. Here and there, black electrical wires drooped above the assembly. The *khozyain* and the scuba diver, hopping down for quick vodka runs, were the only ones in our car who got off besides me.

The day went by, and again the twilight in the *vagon* dimmed to almost-darkness. I ate an energy bar I'd brought along and experimented with new sleeping positions in the front seat. If I hit upon a workable one, I could get an hour or so of napping time, provided the train kept up its regular motion. When it stopped, I grew restless and thrashed around.

During a long stop in the middle of the night, I emerged into consciousness with a sense of something being different now. I got up, opened the van door, walked to the passageway. As I stepped out onto it, my awareness of space expanded enormously: our *vagon* was sitting by itself in a vast, irregularly lighted train yard. This must be Magdagachi. In a minute the *khozyain* joined me, looking a bit rusty from the entertainments of his journey, and confirmed that we had arrived. Suddenly a beam of light swung down on us, backed up by a resounding diesel noise. Behind the light, I could just make out, by shading my eyes, a train engine's massive form. Out of the brightness, stepping onto the coupling at the engine's front, the engineer appeared.

Without preamble the engineer began to yell an abusive stream of complaint or instruction at the *khozyain,* who yelled even more heatedly at him. Amounts of rubles were shouted back and forth. Then the *khozyain* went into his stateroom and reëmerged, cursing, with a wad of bills. He handed it to the engineer, who counted it in the engine's headlight, then put it in his bib. I was told to get out of the way. The engine was then maneuvered around and the *vagon* coupled to it. In another minute we had been pulled up to the unloading ramp. All the drivers in the *vagon* woke up, the sealed-shut back doors opened, and the vehicles rolled down the ramp into the Magdagachi night.

It was one-thirty in the morning when we emerged from the *vagon.* We knew nothing about Magdagachi except its name. The hard-drinking dentist, father of fourteen-year-old Kira, told Sergei that he could lead us to a fuel station that he thought would be open, so we followed him there. He also said that he knew how to find the road out of Magdagachi; but after he fuelled up he drove off without waiting for us, and when we tried to make our way by the directions the fuel-station man gave us we soon were meandering on roads and non-roads in Magdagachi. Finally, we



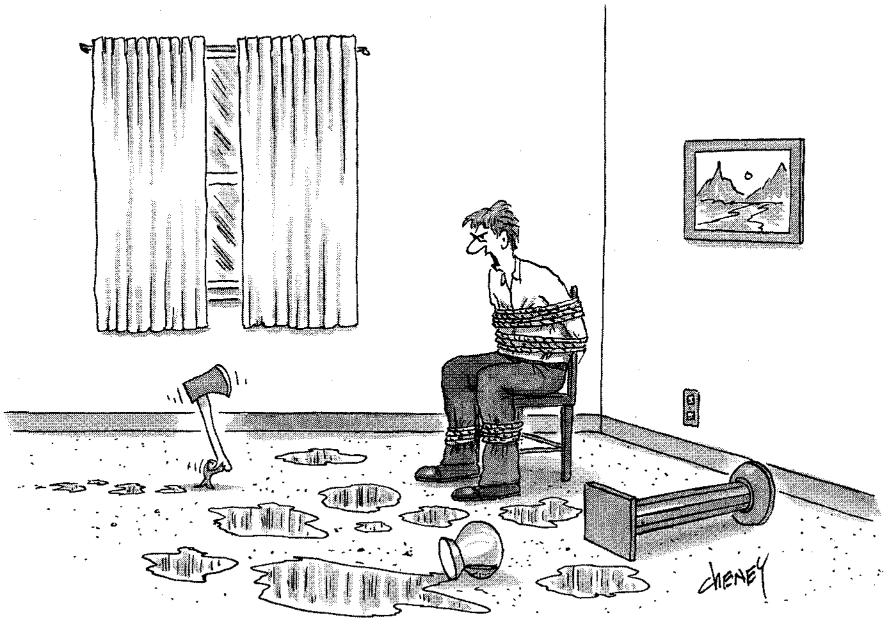
"I'm happy to answer your question as soon as you stop asking it."

got so turned around that we were driving on gravelly nothing zones between unlit buildings, and Sergei pulled over in a weed lot where we spent another few uncomfortable hours attempting to sleep in the van.

A little after dawn, we awoke and set out again, and with more people available at that hour to ask for directions we did find the road. Driving in our dusty, exhaust-fume, no-shock-absorbers van seemed like carefree travel after the gloomy limbo of the *vagon*. A leisurely three hundred kilometres or so farther on, we stopped in the early afternoon and camped on the banks of the Zeya River outside the city of Svobodnyi (Free).

From the Zeya we took a detour off the main road in order to see the Amur River and the city of Blagoveshchensk. *Blagoveshchenie* means "annunciation," and the name is not too lofty for the city, which I thought the handsomest we'd been through since St. Petersburg. Blagoveshchensk is fortunate for two reasons—its light, and China. Something about the Pacific Ocean, maybe, gives a reddish-gold tint to light that spreads up the river and this far inland. The benign and hopeful sunniness of Blagoveshchensk reminded me somehow of Palo Alto, California. Blagoveshchensk and other Amur River cities could be the Golden East, as California was the Golden West. Or maybe this notion was just my homesick imagination. Still, the sun and blue sky and reddish-gold light as we drove around Blagoveshchensk struck me as imported, not quite Russian.

Second, China: The Chinese industrial city of Heihe is just across the Amur. Our radio had begun picking up Chinese radio stations. On the other side of the pale-brown, slow-moving, dauntingly wide Amur the tops of the tallest buildings of Heihe could be seen. Like other Amur River cities, Heihe and Blagoveshchensk participate in an agreement that locally suspends certain visa and customs regulations for the purposes of encouraging trade. I saw several big buildings under construction in Blagoveshchensk, a rarity in these remote areas, and Chinese laborers working on them. The hard hats the workmen wore were made of wicker. A lot of the smaller structures in the city were new. Some had pagoda-style roofs. No thickets of *morkovnik* or other weeds grew along the streets, and the usually omnipresent trash, in heaps or promiscuously strewn, seemed to be gone.



"Bad goldfish!"

• •

We headed out of Blagoveshchensk in its California evening light and settled back for a few hours of driving in what remained of the day, but the road we were on—a major road, and in fact the only one here that continued cross-country, a road marked in red on the map—suddenly came to an end. It reached the Bureya River and just quit. Reëxamining the map, I noticed that the red of the highway did become a dotted line for a very short span at this spot. There was no bridge, no nothing. I had never known a major road to do that before. After a bit of searching, however, we found a ferry landing, albeit sans ferry. The ferryman had apparently taken the ferry to the other side of the Bureya, and no one among the two dozen waiting cars knew when he might return. Sergei backtracked up the road to look for a camping spot, figuring we'd just wait till morning. All we could find were small openings in the thick woods where the weeds grew six feet high. Finally, we plunged the van into an out-of-the-way opening, tramped down some weeds beside it, and pitched our tents.

At the ferry landing the next morning, there were only a few cars, but still no ferry. Soon more cars and several trucks showed up.

Finally the ferry came, loaded a few cars and our van with great slowness, and slowly took us to the other side. A lot of other vehicles were waiting there for the return trip. I could not understand why this one river should be without a bridge; clearly, some of the people in the queue would be there all day. But we seemed to have entered a forgotten zone. As we continued on this alleged cross-country highway, it quit trying altogether and became little more than a swamp lane. On its rare paved stretches you couldn't get too comfortable, because in another moment you'd have to slow down and negotiate mudholes in lowest gear.

Half a day of this brought us to the border of Birobidzhan, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. Under Stalin in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, the idea of setting aside this region in the drainage of the Bira and the Bidzhan Rivers for a Jewish homeland attracted support among Jews in the Soviet Union, America, and elsewhere. Here sparsely occupied land extending for two hundred miles along the Trans-Siberian Railway offered the advantages of plenty of room and no unwelcoming nationalities who needed to be removed. On the other hand, Birobidzhan is a swamp in the middle of

"Hey, Frank, before you quit for the day can you go over these figures?"

nowhere. Although many thousands of Jews, including groups from America, did move here, almost all of them left within a few years. Birobidzhan's Jewish population was four per cent in 1990, and it has gone down since.

BY THE SEA

"Dersu Uzala," the memoir and narrative of exploration by Vladimir K. Arsenyev, begins in 1902, when Arsenyev is a young Army officer assigned the job of exploring and mapping the almost unknown regions east and northeast of Vladivostok, including Lake Khanka and the upper watershed of the Ussuri River. The name for the whole area is the Primorskii Krai—the By-the-Sea Region. It and much of the Khabarovskii Krai, just to the north of it, consist of a unique kind of Pacific forest in which tall hardwoods hung with vines grow beside conifers almost equally high, and the lushness of the foliage, especially along the watercourses, often becomes quite jungly. In Arsenyev's time, this jungle-taiga was full of wildlife, with species ranging from the flying squirrel and the wild boar to the Siberian tiger. Back then (and even recently) tigers could also be seen on the outskirts of Vladivostok, where they sometimes made forays to kill and carry off dogs. Arsenyev describes how tigers in the forest sometimes bellowed like red deer to attract the deer during mating season; the tiger's imitation betrayed itself only at the end of the bellow, when it trailed off into a purr.

The humans one was likely to meet in this nearly trackless forest were Chinese medicine hunters, bandits, inhabitants of little Korean settlements, and hunter-trappers of wild game. Dersu Uzala, a trapper whom Arsenyev and his men come upon early in their 1902 journey, is a Siberian native of the Nanai tribe whose wife and children have died of smallpox and who now is alone. After their meeting, Dersu becomes the party's guide. The book is about Arsenyev's adventures with Dersu on this journey and others, their friendship, and Dersu's decline and end.

In the nineteen-seventies, a Soviet film studio produced a movie of "Dersu Uzala," directed by Akira Kurosawa. It won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film of 1975. The movie is long and slow-paced, like a passage through the forest, and wonderfully evokes the Primorskii country. I own a cassette of the movie and in my many viewings of it even picked up some useful fractured Russian from the distinctive way Dersu talks.

Khabarovsk, the city, figures importantly in the movie—when Dersu, whose sight is failing, moves to Arsenyev's house in the middle of town. Finding the house where Arsenyev lived in Khabarovsk was another of my Siberian goals. Sergei and Volodya completely approved, for a change; they were even bigger fans of Dersu and Arsenyev than I was.

From far off, Khabarovsk looks nothing like the trim little community of the movie. The city occupies one of the great river junctions in this part of the world: at Khabarovsk, the Amur River, having been the border between Russia and China for about sixteen hundred kilometres, turns left, or northeastward, and crosses Russian territory for the rest of its course until reaching the ocean. Meanwhile, the Ussuri River, joining the Amur from the south, takes over as the Russian-Chinese border. Travellers coming to Khabarovsk from the west cross the Amur on a bridge that goes on and on. Sergei said it was the longest bridge in the country. Up ahead, spread out in a succession of ridges above the confluence, Khabarovsk seemed endlessly large. With its tall sky and sprawling landscape, it could have been a city designed for animals considerably larger than humans—mammoths, maybe, or mid-sized dinosaurs.

We soon learned that Arsenyev's house no longer stands. An exhibit about Arsenyev in the regional museum said that an Intourist hotel had been built on the spot where the house used to be.

The next day, we continued southward, passing villages called Roskosh (Luxury), Zvenevay (Small-Group Town), and Tigorovo (Tigerville), and rivers called Pervaya Sedmaya Reka (First Seventh River) and Vtoraya Sedmaya Reka (Second Seventh River). At noontime, we stopped to buy bread in the small city of Bikin. Like most cities of military importance, Bikin had been closed to foreigners until after the end of Soviet times. With the Chinese border only twenty kilometres away, Bikin formerly was fortified with active military installations all around it, and now their barbed wire dangled and their concrete works had turned ramshackle in predictable post-Soviet style. And yet Bikin still had the cloistered feel of a garrison town.

Soon after Bikin, we suddenly entered

a weird all-watermelon area. Watermelon sellers crowded both sides of the road under big umbrellas in beach-ball colors among wildly painted wooden signs. Sergei pulled over and bought a watermelon for a ruble, but as we went along the heaps of them kept growing until melons were spilling into the road and the sellers were giving them away. A man with teeth like a crazy fence hailed us and in high hilarity thrust two watermelons through the passenger-side window. By the time we emerged at the other end of the watermelon gauntlet, we had a dozen or more in the van. The watermelons were almost spherical, antifreeze green, and slightly smaller than soccer balls. We cut one open and tried it—delicious. This was not a part of the world I had previously thought of as a great place for watermelons.

Rather than continue south, directly to Vladivostok, our ultimate destination, we had decided to turn east again, cross the Sikhote-Alin Mountains, and arrive at the Pacific (technically the Sea of Japan) in a less inhabited place on the mountains' other side. The Sikhote-Alins, once we were among them, seemed more like hills, and not very forbidding, but the depth and silence of their forest made up for that. Arsenyev had described the taiga here as "virginal, primeval timberland." From the altitude of the trees and the venerable length of the vines depending from them, I would guess that the taiga we saw was still original growth. That night, we camped above the small gorge of a river named for Arsenyev—the Arsenyevka. The sound of it was pleasant to sit beside; this was our first genuinely rushing stream. I stayed up for a while after Sergei and Volodya had gone to bed, listening to it and looking up at the stars and at the satellites tracking past.

The next day, we continued winding generally eastward through the mountains. I noted villages called Uborka (Harvest), Shumnyi (Noisy), and Rudnyi (Oreville). Now we were in Arsenyev's very footsteps. A little beyond Rudnyi, we crossed a mountain pass that hardly looked like one. This was the divide between the waters that flow roundabout to the Pacific via the Ussuri and the Amur, and those which drain down the front of the Sikhote-Alins and into the Pacific directly. At the crest of the divide, back among the roadside weeds, stood a cement obelisk on which was inscribed: "CROSSED OVER THIS PASS: M. I. VENYUKOV 1858; N. M. PREZHEVALSKII 1887; V. K. ARSENYEV 1906."

Arsenyev's passage across this divide happened during a mapping expedition guided by Dersu and described in detail in the book. The party continued from here until they came to the Pacific and the port village of Olga, where they were resupplied. Sergei said that we would also aim for Olga and camp near there.

Often the taiga stood so close to the road that the vines almost touched the side of the car, and on the upgrades we were looking into the canopy. At one point in the movie "Dersu Uzala," a tiger stalks Arsenyev's party, and the Siberian tiger used for the scene was a splendid animal, all liquid motion and snarling growls. Though near extinction, the Siberian tiger has not yet been wiped out, and the thought that this Pacific forest—reminiscent in some ways of the American and Canadian Northwest—had tigers in it gave the shadows far back among the trees a new level of authority. I had been in a few forests that held grizzly bears, but a forest with tigers in it seemed even more mysterious and honorable.

Rather than go straight to Olga, we turned off at a little road where a sign pointed to Vesyolyi Yar—Merry Cliff. This road as it led eastward and Pacificward was not particularly merry. The closer we approached to the coast, the more falling-down military structures cluttered the scene. Overhead, the sky got bluer and lighter simultaneously in an ever-brightening expansiveness that could only be a reflection of the Pacific just beyond. At the top of each rise, I thought I'd see it. Then we came over a crest above an unusually steep descent, and there ahead, in the notch between two hills: the Pacific Ocean. Against the green of the trees it was a deep pelagic blue, with many white waves.

Past a few more hills and an abandoned gate checkpoint, and then we were on a level, sandy road that served as the main street of another military ghost town. On either side of the road, block after block of three- or four-story cement residential buildings with most of their window glass out showed only occasional signs of human presence. An onshore breeze rattling through the ruins smelled like the sea and made the vacant place spookier.

I saw the water just in glimpses between the buildings, but then the road bore left and we were driving alongside the shore. We stopped and got out. Here we had arrived not at a regular beach, with big rollers coming in, but at the semi-fortified edge of Vladimirskaya Bay. The Pacific rollers I had hoped for could be seen in the distance, at the bay's entrance between its northern and southern headlands. At this spot there were just rocks and broken concrete and pieces of rusted iron, and a small black cow looking for something to eat among them. Between the road and the water a four-metre-high observation tower leaned to one side, and the hulks of two wrecked ships, one still with its stacks and superstructure, sat grounded and tilted over not too far out in the bay.

On the ocean-facing side of a big rock, someone had spray-painted the "NY" logo of the New York Yankees and the "LA" logo of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Also in big white letters on the rock was the word "RAP."

We drove along the shore a little farther, until there were fewer ghost buildings around. In this part, the beach was more beachlike and offered a better setting for our momentous arrival. Wave-smoothed stones and actual sand inclined down to clear and cold waves that were breaking hard on this windy day. Strands of kelp lay here and there like pieces of reel-to-reel tape. I went to the water and put my hand in and cupped some of it and tasted salt. Sergei immediately stripped down to his briefs and dove in and swam. Volodya recorded the event with the video camera while I made a sketch of the bay and the ocean and the sky. During his dip, Sergei stepped on a sea-urchin spine, a painful development, but he mentioned it only in passing among the shouting, hilarity, and mutual congratulations. Finally, we were here. Today was Tuesday, September 11, 2001. We had crossed Russia by land from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean in five weeks and two days. ♦

(This is the second part of a two-part article.)

NEWYORKER.COM

An audio interview with Ian Frazier, and more photographs and sketches of Siberia.

FICTION

WAR DANCES

BY SHERMAN ALEXIE

MY KAFKA BAGGAGE

A few years ago, after I returned home to Seattle from a trip to Los Angeles, I unpacked my bag and found a dead cockroach, shrouded by a dirty sock, in a corner. Shit, I thought. We're being invaded. So I threw the clothes, books, shoes, and toiletries back into the suitcase, carried it out to the driveway, and dumped the contents onto the pavement, ready to stomp on any other cockroach stowaways. But there was only the one cockroach, dead and stiff. As he lay on the pavement, I leaned closer to him. His legs were curled under his body. His head was tilted at a sad angle. Sad? Yes, sad. For who is lonelier than the cockroach without his tribe? I laughed at myself. I was feeling empathy for a dead cockroach. I wondered about its story. How had it got into my bag? And where? At the hotel in Los Angeles? In the airport baggage system? It hadn't originated in our house. We've kept those tiny bastards from our place for fifteen years. So where had this little vermin come from? Had he smelled something delicious in my bag—my musky deodorant or some crumb from a chocolate Power Bar—and climbed inside, only to be crushed by the shifts of fate and garment bags? As he died, did he feel fear? Isolation? Existential dread?

SYMPTOMS

Last summer, in reaction to various allergies I was suffering from, defensive mucus flooded my inner right ear and confused, frightened, and unmoored me. My allergies had never been this severe. I could barely hear a fucking thing with that side, so I had to turn my head in order to understand what my two sons, ages eight and ten, were saying.

"We're hungry," they said. "We keep telling you."

I was embarrassed.

"Mom would have fed us by now," they said.

Their mother had left for Italy with her mother two days before. My sons and I were going to enjoy a boys' week, filled with unwashed socks, REI rock-wall climbing, and ridiculous heaps of pasta.

ALEXIOS TIOYAS

"What are you going to cook?" my sons asked. "Why haven't you cooked yet?"

I'd been lying on the couch reading a book while they played and I hadn't realized that I'd gone partially deaf. So, for just a moment, I could only weakly blame my allergies.

Then I recalled the man who went to the emergency room because he'd woken having lost most, if not all, of his hearing. The doctor peered into one ear, saw an obstruction, reached in with small tweezers, and pulled out a cockroach, then reached into the other ear and extracted a much larger cockroach. Did you know that ear wax is a delicacy for roaches?

I cooked dinner for my sons—overfed them out of guilt—and cleaned the hell out of our home. Then I walked into the bathroom and stood before the mirror. I turned my head and body at weird angles and tried to see deeply into my congested ear; I sang hymns and prayed that I'd see a small angel trapped in the canal. I would free the poor thing, and she'd unfurl and pat dry her tiny wings, then fly to my lips and give me a sweet kiss for sheltering her metamorphosis.

When I woke at 3 A.M., completely deaf in my right ear, and positive that a damn swarm of locusts was wedged inside, I left a message for my doctor, and told him that I would be sitting outside his office when he reported for work.

This would be the first time I had been inside a health-care facility since my father's last surgery.

BLANKETS

After the surgeon had cut off my father's right foot—no, half of my father's right foot—and three toes from the left, I sat with him in the recovery room. It was more like a recovery hallway. There was no privacy, not even a thin curtain. I supposed this made it easier for the nurses to monitor the post-surgical patients, but, still, my father was exposed—his decades of poor health and worse decisions were illuminated—on white sheets in a white hallway under white lights.

"Are you O.K.?" I asked. It was a stupid question. Who could be O.K. after such a thing? Yesterday, my father had walked into the hospital. Yes, he'd shuffled while balancing on two canes, but that was still called walking. A few hours ago, my father still had both of his feet. They were black with rot and disease, but they were still, technically speaking, feet and toes. And, most important, those feet had belonged to my father. Now they were gone, sliced off. Where were they? What had the hospital done with the right foot and the toes from the left foot? Had they been thrown into the incinerator? Were their ashes already floating over the city?

"Doctor, I'm cold," my father said.

"Dad, it's me," I said.

"I know who you are. You're my son." But, given the blankness in my father's eyes, I assumed he was just guessing.

"Dad, you're in the hospital. You just had surgery."

"I know where I am. I'm cold."

"Do you want another blanket?" Stupid question. Of course, he wanted another blanket. He probably wanted me to build a fucking campfire or drag in one of those giant heat blasters that N.F.L. football teams use on the sidelines.

I walked down the hallway—the recovery hallway—to the nurses' station. There were three women nurses there, two white and one black. I am Native American—Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Indian—and I thought my darker pigment might give me an edge with the black nurse, so I addressed her directly.

"My father is cold," I said. "Can I get another blanket?"

The nurse glanced up from her paperwork and regarded me. Her expression was neither compassionate nor callous.

"How can I help you, sir?" she asked.

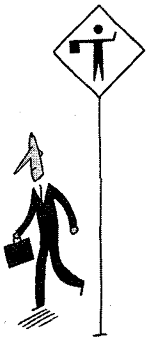
"I'd like another blanket for my father. He's cold."

"I'll be with you in a moment, sir."

She looked back down at her paperwork. She made a few notes. Not knowing what else to do, I stood there and waited.

"Sir," the nurse said. "I'll be with you in a moment."

She was irritated. I understood. After all, how many thousands of times had she been asked for an extra blanket? She was a nurse, an educated woman, not a damn housekeeper. And it was never really about an extra blanket, was it? No, when people asked for an extra blanket they were asking for a time machine. My father, an alcoholic, diabetic Indian with terminally damaged kidneys, had just endured an incredibly expensive surgery for what? So that he could ride his motorized wheelchair to the bar and win bets by showing off his disfigured foot? Yes, she was a health-care worker and she didn't want to be cruel, but she believed that there came a point when doctors should stop rescuing people from their own self-destructive impulses. And I couldn't disagree with her, but I could ask for the most basic of comforts, couldn't I?



"My father," I said. "An extra blanket, please."

"Fine," she said. She got up and walked back to a linen closet, grabbed a white blanket, and handed it to me. "If you need anything else—"

I didn't wait around for the end of her sentence. With the blanket in hand, I walked back to my father. It was a thin blanket, laundered and sterilized a hundred times. In fact, it was too thin. It wasn't really a blanket. It was more like a large beach towel. Hell, it wasn't even good enough for that. It was more like the world's biggest coffee filter. Jesus, had health care finally come to this? Everybody was uninsured and unblanketed.

"Dad, I'm back."

He looked so small and pale lying in that hospital bed. How had this happened? For the first sixty-seven years of his life, my father had been a large and dark man. Now he was just another pale, sick drone in a hallway of pale, sick drones. A hive, I thought. This place is like a beehive with colony-collapse disorder.

"Dad, it's me."

"I'm cold."

"I have a blanket."

As I draped it over my father and tucked it around his body, I felt the first sting of grief. I'd read the hospital literature about this moment. There would come a time when roles would reverse and the adult child would become the caretaker of the ill parent. The circle of life. Such poetic bullshit.

"I can't get warm," my father said. "I'm freezing."

"I brought you a blanket, Dad. I put it on you."

"Get me another one. Please. I'm so cold. I need another blanket."

I knew that ten more of these cheap blankets wouldn't be enough. My father needed a real blanket, a good blanket.

I walked out of the recovery hallway and made my way through various doorways and other hallways, peering into rooms, looking at the patients and their families, searching for a particular kind of patient and family.

I walked through the E.R., through the cancer, heart and vascular, neuroscience, orthopedic, women's health, pediatric, and surgical wards. Nobody stopped me. My expression and posture were those of a man with a sick father, and so I belonged.

And then I saw him, another Native man, leaning against a wall near the gift shop. Well, maybe he was Asian—lots of those in Seattle. He was a small man, pale brown, with muscular arms and a soft belly. Maybe he was Mexican, which is really a kind of Indian, too, but not the kind that I needed. It's hard to tell sometimes what people are. Even brown people guess at the identity of other brown people.

"Hey," I said.

"Hey," the other man said.

"You Indian?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"What tribe?"

"Lummi."

"I'm Spokane."

"My first wife was Spokane. I hated her."

"My first wife was Lummi. She hated me."

We laughed at the new jokes that instantly sounded old.

"Why are you in here?" I asked.

"My sister is having a baby," he said. "But don't worry, it's not mine."

"Ayyyyyy," I said and laughed.

"I don't even want to be here," the other Indian said. "But my dad started, like, this new Indian tradition. He says it's a thousand years old. But that's bullshit. He just made it up to impress himself. And the whole family goes along with it, even when we know it's bullshit. He's in the delivery room waving eagle feathers around. Jesus."

"What's the tradition?"

"Oh, he does a naming ceremony right in the hospital. It's supposed to protect the baby from all the technology and shit. Like hospitals are the big problem. You know how many babies died before we had good hospitals?"

"I don't know."

"Most of them. Well, shit, a lot of them, at least."

This guy was talking out of his ass. I liked him immediately.

"I mean," the guy said. "You should see my dad right now. He's pretending to go into this, like, fucking trance, dancing around my sister in the bed, and he says he's trying to, you know, see into her womb, to see who the baby is, to see its true nature, so he can give it a name—a protective name—before it's born."

The guy laughed and threw his head back, banging it on the wall.

"I mean, come on, I'm a loser," he said and rubbed his sore skull. "My whole family is filled with losers."

The Indian world is filled with charlatans, men and women who pretend—hell, who might have come to believe—that they are holy. The year before, I went to a lecture at the University of Washington. An elderly Indian woman, a scholar, had come to orate on Indian sovereignty and literature. She kept arguing for some kind of separate indigenous literary identity, which was ironic considering that she was speaking English to a room full of white professors. But I wasn't angry with the woman, or even bored. No, I felt sorry for her. I realized that she was dying of nostalgia. She had taken nostalgia as her false idol—her thin blanket—and it was murdering her.

"Nostalgia," I said.

"What?"

"Your dad, he sounds like he's got a bad case of nostalgia."

"Yeah, I hear you catch that from fucking old high-school girlfriends," the man said. "What the hell you doing here, anyway?"

"My dad just got his feet cut off," I said.

"Diabetes?"

"And vodka."

"Vodka straight up or with a nostalgia chaser?"

"Both."

"Natural causes for an Indian."

"Yep."

There wasn't much to say after that.

"Well, I better get back," the man said. "Otherwise, my dad might wave an eagle feather and change my name."

"Hey, wait," I said.

"Yeah?"

"Can I ask you a favor?"

"What?"

"My dad, he's in the recovery room," I said. "Well, it's more like a hallway, and he's freezing, and they've only got these shitty little blankets, and I came looking for Indians in the hospital because I figured—well, I guessed if I found any Indians they might have some good blankets."

"So you want to borrow a blanket from us?" the man asked.

"Yeah."

"Because you thought Indians would just happen to have some extra blankets lying around?"

"Yeah."

"That's fucking ridiculous."

"I know."

"And it's racist."

"I know."

"You're stereotyping your own damn people."

"I know."

"But damn if we don't have a room full of Pendleton blankets. New ones. Jesus, you'd think my sister was having, like, a dozen babies."

Five minutes later, carrying a Pendleton Star blanket, the Indian man walked out of his sister's hospital room, accompanied by his father, who wore Levi's, a black T-shirt, and eagle feathers in his gray braids.

"We want to give your father this blanket," the old man said. "It was meant for my grandson, but I think it will be good for your father, too."

"Thank you."

"Let me bless it. I will sing a healing song for the blanket. And for your father."

I flinched. This old man wanted to sing a song? That was dangerous. The song could take two minutes or two hours. It was impossible to know. Hell, considering how desperate the old man was to be seen as holy, he might sing for a week. I couldn't let him begin his song without issuing a caveat.

"My dad," I said. "I really need to get back to him. He's really sick."

"Don't worry," the old man said, winking. "I'll sing one of my short ones."

Jesus, who'd ever heard of a self-aware fundamentalist? The son, perhaps not the unbeliever he'd pretended to be, sang backup as his father launched into a radio-friendly honor song, just three and a half minutes, like any Top Forty rock song of the past fifty years. But here's the funny thing: the old man couldn't sing very well. If you had the balls to sing healing songs in hospital hallways, then you should have a great voice, right? But, no, this guy couldn't keep the tune; his voice cracked and wavered. Does a holy song lose its power if the singer is untalented?

"That is your father's song," the old man said when he finished. "I give it to him. I will never sing it again. It belongs to your father now."

Behind his back, the old man's son rolled his eyes and walked into his sister's room.

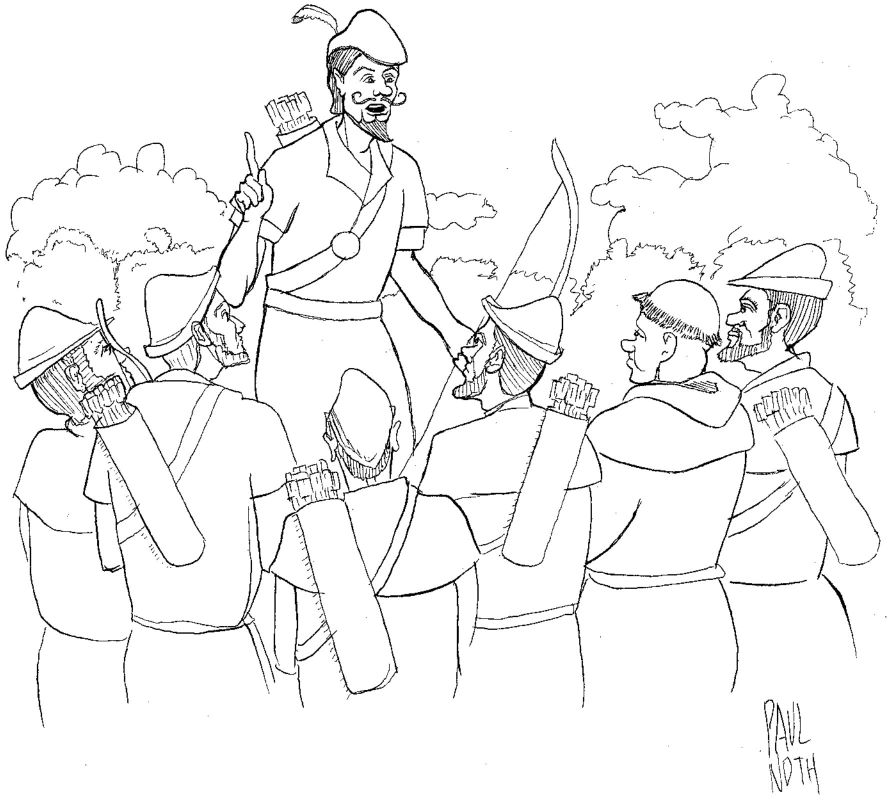
"O.K., thank you," I said. I felt like an ass, accepting the blanket and the old man's good wishes, and silently mocking them at the same time. But maybe the old man did have some power, some real medicine, because he peeked into my brain.

"It doesn't matter if you believe in the healing song," he said. "It only matters that the blanket heard."

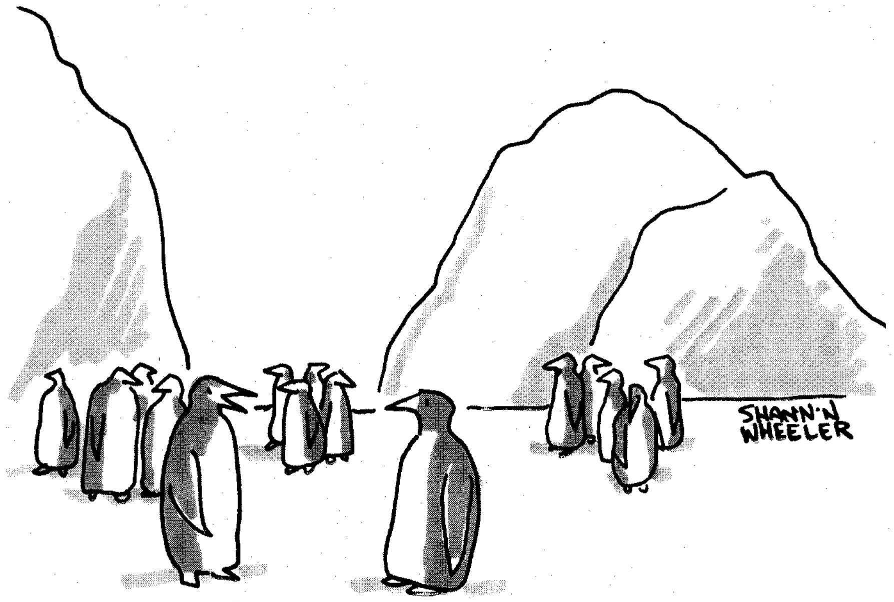
"Where have you been?" my father asked when I returned. "I'm cold."

"I know, I know," I said. "I found you a blanket. A good one. It will keep you warm."

I draped the Star blanket over my father. He pulled the thick wool up to his chin. And then he began to sing. It was a healing song, not the same song that I had just heard but a healing song nonetheless. My father could sing beautifully. I wondered if it was proper for a man to sing a healing song for himself. I wondered if my father needed help with the song. I hadn't sung for many years, not like that, but I joined him. I knew that this song would not bring back my father's feet. This song would not repair my father's



"Henceforth, we steal from the rich and provide incentives to help the poor steal for themselves."



"It turns out I was having an affair and I didn't even know it."

• •

bladder, kidneys, lungs, and heart. This song would not prevent my father from drinking a bottle of vodka as soon as he could sit up in bed. This song would not defeat death. No, I thought, this song is temporary, but right now temporary is good enough. And it was a good song. Our voices filled the recovery hallway. The sick and the healthy stopped to listen. The nurses, even the remote black one, unconsciously took a few steps toward us. She sighed and smiled. I smiled back. I knew what she was thinking. Sometimes, even after all these years, she could still be surprised by her work. She still marvelled at the infinite and ridiculous faith of other people.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

I took my kids with me to my doctor, a handsome man—a reservist—who'd served in both Iraq wars. I told him that I couldn't hear because of my allergies. He said he would likely have to clear wax and mucus out of my ear, but when he scoped inside he discovered nothing.

"Nope, it's all dry in there," he said.

He led my sons and me to the audiologist in the other half of the building. I was scared, but I wanted my children to remain calm, so I tried to stay measured. More than anything, I wanted my wife to materialize.

During the hearing test, I heard only thirty per cent of the clicks, bells, and words—I apparently had nerve- and bone-conductive deafness. My inner ear thumped and thumped.

How many cockroaches were in my head?

My doctor said, "We need an MRI of your ear and brain, and maybe we'll find out what's going on."

"Maybe"? That word terrified me.

What the fuck was wrong with my fucking head? Had my hydrocephalus come back? Had my levees burst? Was I going to flood?

HYDROCEPHALUS

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines "hydrocephalus" as "an abnormal increase in the amount of cerebrospinal fluid within the cranial cavity that is accompanied by expansion of the cerebral ventricles, enlargement of the skull and especially the forehead, and atrophy of the brain." I define "hydrocephalus" as "the obese, imperialistic water demon that nearly killed me when I was a baby."

In order to save my life, and stop the water demon, I had brain surgery in 1967, when I was six months old. I was supposed to die. Obviously, I didn't. I was supposed to be severely mentally disabled. I have only minor to moderate brain damage. I was supposed to have epileptic seizures. Those I did have, until I was seven years old. I was on phenobarbital, a major-league anti-seizure medication, for six years.

The side effects of phenobarbital—all of which I suffered to some degree or another as a child—are sleepwalking, agitation, confusion, depression, nightmares, hallucinations, insomnia, apnea, vomiting, constipation, dermatitis, fever, liver and bladder dysfunction, and psychiatric disturbance.

How do you like them cockroaches?

Now, as an adult, thirty-three years removed from phenobarbital, I still suffer—to some degree or another—from sleepwalking, agitation, confusion, depression, nightmares, hallucinations, insomnia, bladder dysfunction, apnea, and dermatitis.

Is there such a disease as post-phenobarbital traumatic stress disorder?

Most hydrocephalics are shunted. A shunt is essentially brain plumbing that drains away excess cerebrospinal fluid. The shunts often fuck up and stop working. I know hydrocephalics who've had a hundred or more shunt revisions and repairs. That's more than a hundred brain surgeries. There are ten fingers on any surgeon's hands. There are two or three surgeons involved in any particular brain operation. That means that some hydrocephalics have had their brains fondled by three thousand fingers.

I'm lucky. I was shunted only temporarily. And I hadn't suffered any hydrocephalic symptoms since I was seven years old.

Until July, 2008, when, at the age of forty-one, I went deaf in my right ear.

CONVERSATION

Sitting in my car in the hospital parking garage, I called my brother-in-law, who was babysitting my sons.

"Hey, it's me. I just got done with the MRI on my head."

My brother-in-law said something unintelligible. I realized that I was holding my cell to my bad ear, and I switched it to the good ear.

"The MRI dude didn't look happy," I said.

“That’s not good,” my brother-in-law said.

“No, it’s not. But he’s just a tech guy, right? He’s not an expert on brains or anything. He’s just the photographer, really. And he doesn’t know anything about ears or deafness or anything, I don’t think. Ah, hell, I don’t know what he knows. I just didn’t like the look on his face when I was done.”

“Maybe he just didn’t like you.”

“Well, I got worried when I told him I had hydrocephalus when I was a baby and he didn’t seem to know what that was.”

“Nobody knows what that is.”

“That’s the truth. Have you fed the boys dinner?”

“Yeah, but I was scrounging. There’s not much here.”

“I better go shopping.”

“Are you sure? I can do it if you need me to. I can shop the shit out of Trader Joe’s.”

“No, it’ll be good for me. I feel good. I fell asleep during the MRI. And I kept twitching, so we had to do it twice. Otherwise, I would’ve been done earlier.”

“That’s O.K. I’m O.K. The boys are O.K.”

“You know, before you go in the MRI tube they ask you what kind of music you want to listen to—jazz, classical, rock, or country—and I remembered how my dad spent a lot of time in MRI tubes near the end of his life. So I was wondering what kind of music he chose. I mean, he couldn’t hear shit anyway by that time, but he still must have chosen something. And I wanted to choose the same thing he chose. So I picked country.”

“Was it good country?”

“It was fucking Shania Twain and Faith Hill shit. I was hoping for George Jones or Loretta Lynn, or even some George Strait. Hell, I would’ve cried if they’d played Charley Pride or Freddy Fender.”

“You wanted to hear the Alcoholic Indian Father Jukebox.”

“Hey, that’s my line. You can’t quote me to me.”

“Why not? You’re always quoting you to you.”

“Kiss my ass. So, hey, I’m O.K., I think. And I’m going to the store. I’ll see you in a bit. You want anything?”

“Ah, man, I love Trader Joe’s. But you know what’s bad about them? You fall in love with something they have—they stock it for a year—and then it just disappears. They had those wontons I loved, and now they don’t. I was willing to shop for you and the boys, but I don’t want anything for me. I’m on a one-man hunger strike against them.”

WORLD PHONE CONVERSATION, 3 A.M.

After I got home with yogurt and turkey dogs and Cinnamon Toast Crunch and my brother-in-law left, I watched George Romero’s “Diary of the Dead,” and laughed at myself for choosing a movie that featured dozens of zombies getting shot in the head.

When the movie was over, I called my wife, nine hours ahead in Italy.

“I should come home,” she said.

“No, I’m O.K.,” I said. “Come on, you’re in Rome. What are you seeing today?”

“The Vatican.”

“You can’t leave now. You have to go and steal something. It will be revenge for every Indian. Or maybe you can plant an eagle feather and claim that you just discovered Italy.”

“I’m worried.”

“Yeah, Catholicism has always worried me.”

“Stop being funny. I should see if I can get Mom and me on a flight tonight.”

“No, no, listen, your mom is old. This might be her last adventure. It might be your last adventure with her. Stay there. Say hi to the Pope for me. Tell him I like his shoes.”

That night, my sons climbed into bed with me. We all slept curled around one another like sled dogs in a snowstorm. I woke, hour by hour, and touched my head and neck to see if they had changed shape—to feel if antennae were growing. Some insects hear with their antennae. Maybe that was what was happening to me.

VALEDICTION

My father, a part-time blue-collar construction worker, died of full-time alcoholism in March, 2003. On his deathbed, he said to me, “Turn down that light, please.”

“Which light?” I asked.

“The light on the ceiling.”

“Dad, there’s no light.”

“It burns my skin, son. It’s too bright. It hurts my eyes.”

“Dad, I promise you there’s no light.”

“Don’t lie to me, son. It’s God passing judgment on earth.”

“Dad, you’ve been an atheist since ’79. Come on, you’re just remembering your birth. On your last day, you’re going back to your first.”

“No, son, it’s God telling me I’m doomed. He’s using the brightest lights in the universe to show me the way to my flame-filled tomb.”

“No, Dad, those lights were in your delivery room.”

“If that’s true, son, then turn down my mother’s womb.”

We buried my father in the tiny Catholic cemetery on our reservation. Since I am named after him, I had to stare at a tombstone with my name on it.

BATTLE FATIGUE

Two months after my father’s death, I began research on a book about our family’s history with war. I had a cousin who served as a cook in the Gulf War, in 1990; I had another cousin who served in the Vietnam War as a cook; and my father’s father, Adolph, served in the Second World War and was killed in action on Okinawa, on April 5, 1945.

During my research, I interviewed thirteen men who’d served with my cousin in Vietnam but could find only one surviving man who’d served with my grandfather. This is a partial transcript of that interview, recorded with a microphone and an iPod on January 14, 2008:

Me: Ah, yes, hello. I’m here in Livonia, Michigan, to interview—well, perhaps you should introduce yourself, please?

Leonard Elmore: What?

Me: Um, oh, I’m sorry, I was asking if you could perhaps introduce yourself.

L.E.: You’re going to have to speak up. I think my hearing aid is going low on power or something.

Me: That is a fancy thing in your ear.

L.E.: Yeah, let me mess with it a bit. I got a remote control for it. I can listen to the TV, the stereo, and the telephone with this thing. It’s fancy. It’s one of them Bluetooth hearing aids. My grandson bought it for me. Wait, O.K., there we go. I can hear now. So, what were you asking?

Me: I was hoping you could introduce yourself into my recorder here.

L.E.: Sure, my name is Leonard Elmore.

Me: How old are you?

L.E.: I'm eighty-five and a half years old (*laughter*). My great-grandkids are always saying they're seven and a half or nine and a half or whatever. It just cracks me up to say the same thing at my age.

Me: So, that's funny, um, but I'm here to ask you some questions about my grandfather—

L.E.: Adolph. It's hard to forget a name like that. An Indian named Adolph, and there was that Nazi bastard named Adolph. Your grandfather caught plenty of grief over that. But we mostly called him Chief. Did you know that?

Me: I could have guessed.

L.E.: Yeah, nowadays I suppose it isn't a good thing to call an Indian Chief, but back then it was what we did. I served with a few Indians. They didn't segregate them Indians, you know, not like the black boys. I know you aren't supposed to call them boys anymore, but they were boys. All of us were boys, I guess. But the thing is, those Indian boys lived and slept and ate with us white boys. They were right there with us. But, anyway, we called all them Indians Chief. I bet you've been called Chief a few times yourself.

Me: Just once.

L.E.: Were you all right with it?

Me: I threw a basketball in the guy's face.

L.E. (*laughs*).

Me: We live in different times.

L.E.: Yes, we do. Yes, we do.

Me: So, perhaps you could, uh, tell me something about my grandfather.

L.E.: I can tell you how he died.

Me: Really?

L.E.: Yeah, it was on Okinawa, and we hit the beach, and, well, it's hard to talk about it. It was the worst thing—it was hell. No, that's not even a good way to describe it. I'm not a writer like you, I'm not a poet, so I don't have the word, but just think of it this way. That beach, that island, was filled with sons and fathers, men who loved and were loved, American and Japanese and Okinawan, and all of us were dying, were being killed by other sons and fathers who also loved and were loved.

Me: That sounds like poetry to me—tragic poetry.

L.E.: Well, anyway, it was like that. Fire everywhere. And two of our boys, Jonesy and O'Neal, went down, were wounded and in the open on the sand. And your grandfather—who was just this little man, barely over five feet tall and maybe a hundred and thirty pounds—he just ran out there and picked up those two guys, one on each shoulder, and carried them to cover. Hey, are you O.K., son?

Me: Yes, I'm sorry. But, well, the thing is, I knew my grandfather was a war hero—he won twelve medals—but I could never find out what he did to win the medals.

L.E.: I didn't know about any medals. I just know what I saw. Your grandfather saved those two boys, but he got shot in the back doing it. And he lay there in the sand—I was lying right beside him—and he died.

Me: Did he say anything before he died?

L.E.: Hold on. I need to—

Me: Are you O.K.?

L.E.: It's just—I can't—

Me: I'm sorry. Is there something wrong?

L.E.: No, it's just—with your book and everything, I know you want something big here. I know you want something big from your grandfather. I know you're hoping he said something huge and poetic, and, honestly, I was thinking about lying to you. I was thinking about making up something as beautiful as I could. Something about love and forgiveness and courage and all that. But I couldn't think of anything good enough. And I didn't want to lie to you. So I have to be honest and say that your grandfather didn't say anything. He just died there in the sand. In silence.

ORPHANS

I could not sleep. I was scared that I would die if I slept. And I didn't want my sons to become orphans—partial orphans—as they slept. So I stayed awake and waited for dawn. Then, at 3 A.M., the phone rang.

"It's me," my wife said. "I don't care what you say. I'll be home in sixteen hours."

"Thank you," I said.

COFFEE-SHOP NEWS

While I waited for the results of the MRI, I asked my brother-in-law to watch the boys again because I didn't want to get bad news in front of them.

Alone and haunted, I wandered the mall, tried on clothes, and waited for my cell phone to ring.

Two hours later, I wanted to murder everything, so I drove south to a coffee joint, a spotless place called Dirty Joe's. Yes, I was silly enough to think that I'd be calmer with a caffeinated drink.

As I sat outside in a wooden chair and sipped my coffee, I cursed the vague, rumbling, ringing noise in my ear. And yet when my cell phone rang I again held it to my deaf ear.

"Hello. Hello," I said and wondered if it was a prank call, then remembered and switched the phone to my left ear.

"Hello," my doctor said. "Are you there?"

"Yes," I said. "So what's going on?"

"There are irregularities in your head."

"My head's always been irregular."

"It's good to have a sense of humor," the doctor said. "You have a small tumor that is called a meningioma. They grow in the meninges membranes that lie between your brain and your skull."

"Shit," I said. "I have cancer."

"Well," he said. "These kinds of tumors are usually non-cancerous. And they grow very slowly, so in six months or so we'll do another MRI. Don't worry. You're going to be O.K."

"What about my hearing?" I asked.

"We don't know what is causing the hearing loss, but you should start a course of prednisone, a steroid, just to go with the odds. Your deafness might lessen if left alone, but we've had success with the steroids in bringing back hearing. There are side effects, like insomnia, weight gain, night sweats, and depression."

"Oh, boy," I said. "Those side effects might make up most of my personality already. Will the 'roids also make me quick to pass judgment? And I've always wished I had a dozen more skin tags and moles."

The doctor chuckled. "You're a funny man."

I wanted to throw my phone into a wall, but I said goodbye instead and glared at the tumorless people and their pretty tumorless heads.

MENINGIOMA

Mayoclinic.com gave this definition of "meningioma": "a tumor that arises from the meninges—the membranes that surround your brain and spinal cord. The majority of meningioma cases are noncancerous (benign), though rarely a meningioma can be cancerous (malignant)."

It was a scary and yet strangely positive description. No one ever wants to read the word "malignant" unless you're reading a Charles Dickens novel about an evil landlord, but "benign" and "majority" are two words that go well together.

From the University of Washington Medical School Web site I learned that meningioma tumors "are usually benign, slow growing and do not spread into normal brain tissue. Typically, a meningioma grows inward causing pressure on the brain or spinal cord. It may grow outward toward the skull, causing it to thicken."

So, wait, what the fuck? A meningioma can cause pressure on the brain, and spinal fluid? Oh, you mean just like fucking hydrocephalus? Just like the water demon that once tried to crush my brain and kill me? Armed with this new information—with these new questions—I called my doctor.

"Hey, you're O.K.," he said. "We're

going to closely monitor you. And your meningioma is very small."

"O.K., but I just read—"

"Did you go on the Internet?"

"Yes."

"Which sites?"

"Mayo Clinic and the University of Washington."

"O.K., those are pretty good sites. Let me look at them."

I listened to my doctor type.

"O.K., those are accurate," he said.

"What do you mean by accurate?" I asked. "I mean, the whole pressure-on-the-brain thing—that sounds like hydrocephalus."

"Well, there were some irregularities in your MRI that were the burr holes from your surgery, and there seems to be some scarring and perhaps you had an old concussion. But other than that it all looks fine."

"But what about me going deaf? Can't these tumors make you lose hearing?"

"Yes, but only if they're located near an auditory nerve. And your tumor is not."

"Can this tumor cause pressure on my brain?"

"It could, but yours is too small for that."

"So I'm supposed to trust you on the tumor thing when you can't figure out the hearing thing?"

"There is no physical correlation between your deafness and the tumor. Do the twenty-day treatment of prednisone, and the audiologist and I will examine your ear and your hearing then. If there's no improvement, we'll figure out other ways of treating you."

"But you won't be treating the tumor?"

"Like I said, we'll scan you again in six to nine months—"

"You said six before."

"O.K., in six months we'll take another MRI, and if it has grown significantly—or has changed shape or location or anything dramatic—then we'll talk about treatment options. But if you look on the Internet—and I know you're going to spend a lot of time obsessing about this, so I'll tell you what you'll find. About two per cent of the population live their whole lives with undetected meningiomas. The tumors can become quite large, without any side effects, and are found only at autopsies conducted for other reasons of death. Even when these kinds of tumors become invasive or dangerous, they are still rarely fatal. And your tumor, even if it grows fairly quickly, will not likely become an issue for many years, decades. So that's what I can tell you right now. How are you feeling?"

"Freaked and fucked."

I wanted to feel reassured, but I had a brain tumor. How can one feel any optimism about being diagnosed with a brain tumor? Even if that brain tumor is neither cancerous nor interested in crushing one's brain?

DRUGSTORE INDIAN

In Bartell Drugs, I gave the pharmacist my prescription for prednisone.

"Is this your first fill with us?" she asked.

"No," I said. "And it won't be my last."

I felt like an ass, but she looked bored.

"It'll take thirty minutes," she said. "More or less. We'll page you over the speakers."

I don't think I'd ever felt weaker. Or more vulnerable. Or more absurd. I was the weak antelope in the herd—yeah, the mangy fucker with the big limp and a sign that read, "Eat Me! I'm a Gimp!"

So for thirty minutes I walked the store and found myself shoving more and more useful shit into my shopping basket, as if I were filling my casket with things I'd need in the afterlife. I grabbed toothpaste, a Swiss Army knife, moisturizer, mouthwash, nonstick Band-Aids, antacid, protein bars, and extra razor blades. I grabbed pen and paper. And I also grabbed an ice scraper and sunscreen. Who can predict what kind of weather awaits us in Heaven?

This random shopping made me feel better for a few minutes, but then I stopped and walked to the toy aisle. My boys needed gifts, Lego cars or something, for a lift, a shot of capitalist joy. But the selection of proper toys is both an art and a science. I have been wrong as often as right and have heard the sad song of a disappointed son.

Shit, I knew that if I died my sons would survive, even thrive, because of their graceful mother.

I thought of my father's life. He had

EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE
EXIT
SIPRESS

"Please turn on your cell phones."

been just six when his father was killed in the Second World War. Then his mother, ill with tuberculosis, had died a few months later. Six years old and my father was cratered. In most ways, he never stopped being six. There was no religion, no magic, and no song or dance that could have helped my father.

I needed a drink of water, so I found the fountain and drank and drank until the pharmacist called my name.

"Have you taken these before?" she asked.

I said, "No, but they're going to kick my ass, aren't they?"

That made the pharmacist smile, so I felt sadly and briefly worthwhile. But another customer, some nosy hag, said, "You've got a lot of sleepless nights ahead of you."

I was shocked. I stammered, glared at her, and said, "Miss, how is this any of your business? Please, just fuck all the way off, O.K.?"

She had no idea what to say, so she just turned and walked away, and I pulled out my credit card and paid far too much for my goddam steroids, and forgot to bring the toys home to my boys.

EXIT INTERVIEW FOR MY FATHER

- True or False: When a reservation-raised Native American dies of alcoholism, it should be considered death by natural causes.
- Do you understand the term "wanderlust," and, if you do, can you please tell us, in twenty-five words or less, what place made you wanderlust the most?
- Did you, when drunk, ever get behind the tattered wheel of a '76 Ford three-speed van and somehow drive your family a thousand miles on an empty tank of gas?
- Is it true that the only literary term that has any real meaning in the Native American world is "road movie"?
- How many times, during any of your road trips, did your children ask you, "Are we there yet?"
- In twenty-five words or less, please define "there."
- Sir, in your thirty-nine years as a parent you broke your children's hearts, collectively and individually, six hundred and twelve times, and you did this without ever striking any human being in anger. Does this absence of physical violence make you a better man than you might otherwise have been?
- Without using the words "man" or "good," can you please define what it means to be a good man?
- Do you think you will see angels before you die? Do you think angels will come to escort you to Heaven? As the angels are carrying you to Heaven, how many times will you ask, "Are we there yet?"
- Your son distinctly remembers stopping once or twice a month at that grocery store in Freeman, Washington, where you would buy him a red-white-and-blue rocket Popsicle and purchase for yourself a pickled pig foot. Your son distinctly remembers that the feet still had their toenails and little tufts of pig fur. Could this be true? Did you actually eat such horrendous food?
- Your son has often made the joke that you were the only Indian of your generation who went to Catholic school on purpose. This is, of course, a tasteless joke that makes light of the forced incarceration and subsequent physical, spiritual, cultural, and sexual abuse of tens of thousands of Native American children in Catholic and Protestant boarding schools. In consideration of your son's questionable judgment in telling jokes, do you think there should be any moral limits placed on comedy?
- Your other son and your two daughters, all over thirty-six years of age, still live in your house. Do you think that this is a lovely expression of tribal culture? Or is it a symptom of extreme familial co-dependency? Or is it both things at the same time?
- F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote that the sign of a superior mind "is the ability to hold two opposing ideas at the same time." Do you believe this to be true? And is it also true that you once said, "The only time white people tell the truth is when they keep their mouths shut"?
- A poet once wrote, "Pain is never added to pain. It multiplies." Can you tell us, in twenty-five words or less, exactly how much we all hate mathematical blackmail?
- Your son wrote this poem to explain one of the most significant nights in his life:

Mutually Assured Destruction

When I was nine, my father sliced his knee
With a chainsaw. But he let himself bleed
And finished cutting down one more tree
Before his boss drove him to EMERGENCY.

Late that night, stoned on morphine and beer,
My father needed my help to steer
His pickup into the woods. "Watch for deer,"
My father said. "Those things just appear

Like magic." It was an Indian summer
And we drove through warm rain and thunder,
Until we found that chainsaw, lying under
The fallen pine. Then I watched, with wonder,

As my father, shotgun-rich and impulse-poor,
Blasted that chainsaw dead. "What was that for?"
I asked. "Son," my father said. "Here's the score.
Once a thing tastes blood, it will come for more."

- Well, first of all, as you know, you did cut your knee with a chainsaw, but in direct contradiction to your son's poem:

(a) You immediately went to the emergency room.

(b) Your boss called your wife, who drove you to the emergency room.

(c) You were given morphine, but even you were not stupid enough to drink alcohol while on serious narcotics.

(d) You and your son did not get into the pickup that night.

(e) And, even if you had driven the pickup, you were not injured seriously enough to need your son's help with the pedals and/or the steering wheel.

(f) You never in your life used the word "appear," and you certainly never used the phrase "like magic."

(g) You think that "Indian summer" is a questionable seasonal reference for an Indian poet to use.

(h) What the fuck is "warm rain and thunder"? Well, everybody knows what "warm rain" is, but what the fuck is "warm thunder"?

(i) You never went looking for that chainsaw, because it belonged to the Spokane Tribe of Indians, and what kind of freak would want to reclaim the chainsaw that had just cut the shit out of his knee?

(j) You also agree that the entire

third stanza of this poem sounds like a Bruce Springsteen song, and not necessarily one of the great ones.

(k) And yet "shotgun-rich and impulse-poor" is one of the greatest descriptions your son has ever written and probably redeems the entire poem.

(l) You never owned a shotgun. You did own a few rifles in your youth, but did not own so much as a pellet gun during the last thirty years of your life.

(m) You never said, in any context, "Once a thing tastes blood, it will come for more."

(n) But, as you read it, you know that is absolutely true and does indeed sound suspiciously like your entire life philosophy.

(o) Other summations of your life philosophy include: "It's all wasted days and wasted nights."

(p) And: "If God really loved Indians, he would have made us white people."

(q) And: "Oscar Robertson should be the man on the N.B.A. logo. They only put Jerry West on there because he's a white guy."

(r) And: "A peanut-butter sandwich with onions—damn, that's the way to go."

(s) And: "Why eat a pomegranate when you can eat a plain old apple. Or a carrot. When it comes to fruit and vegetables, eat only the simple stuff."

(t) And: "If you really want a woman to love you, then you have to dance. And if you don't want to dance, then you're going to have to work extra hard to make a woman love you forever, and you will always run the risk that she will leave you at any second for a man who knows how to tango."

(u) And: "I really miss those cafeterias they used to have at Kmart. I don't know why they stopped having those. If there is a Heaven, I firmly believe it's a Kmart cafeteria."

(v) And: "A father always knows what his sons are doing. For instance, boys, I knew you were sneaking that *Hustler* magazine out of my bedroom. You remember that one. Where actors who looked like Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura were screwing on the bridge of the Enterprise. Yeah, that one. I know you kept borrowing it. I let you borrow it. Remember this: men and pornography are like plants and sunshine. To me, porn is photosynthesis."

(w) And: "Your mother is a better man than me. Mothers are almost always better men than men are."

REUNION

After she returned from Italy, my wife climbed into bed with me. I felt as if I hadn't slept comfortably in years.

I said, "There was a rumor that I'd grown a tumor, but I killed it with humor."

"How long have you been waiting to tell me that one?" she asked.

"Oh, probably since the first time some doctor put his fingers in my brain."

We made love. We fell asleep. But, agitated by the steroids, I woke at 2, 3, 4, and 5 A.M. The bed was killing my back, so I lay flat on the floor. I wasn't going to die anytime soon, at least not because of my little friend Tumor, but that didn't make me feel any more comfortable or comforted. I felt distant from the world—from my wife and my sons, from my mother and my siblings, from all my friends. I felt closest to those who'd always had fingers in their brains.

I didn't feel any closer to the world six months later, when another MRI revealed that my meningioma had not grown in size or changed its shape.

"You're looking good," my doctor said. "How's your hearing?"

"I think I've got about ninety per cent of it back."

"Well, then, the steroids worked. Good."

And I didn't feel any more intimate with the world nine months after that, when one more MRI made my doctor hypothesize that my meningioma might only be more scar tissue from the hydrocephalus.

"Frankly," he said, "your brain is beautiful."

"Thank you," I said, though it was the oddest compliment I'd ever received.

I wanted to call my father and tell him that a white man thought my brain was beautiful. But I couldn't tell him anything. He was dead. I told my wife and my sons that I was O.K. I told my mother and my siblings. I told my friends. But none of them laughed as hard about my beautiful brain as I knew my father—the drunk bastard—would have. ◆

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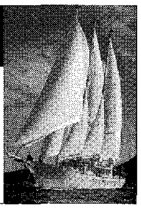

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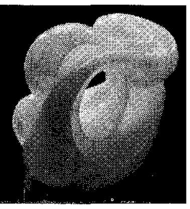

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THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

WILDER WOMEN

The mother and daughter behind the Little House stories.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

In April of 1932, an unlikely literary débutante published her first book. Laura Elizabeth Ingalls Wilder was a matron of sixty-five, neat and tiny—about four feet eleven—who was known as Bessie to her husband, Almanzo, and as Mama Bess to her daughter, Rose. The family lived at Rocky Ridge, a farm in the Ozarks, near Mansfield, Missouri, where Wilder raised chickens and tended an apple orchard. She also enjoyed meetings of her embroidery circle, and of the Justamere Club, a study group that she helped found. Readers of *The Missouri Ruralist* knew her as Mrs. A. J. Wilder, the author of a biweekly column. Her sensible opinions on housekeeping, marriage, husbandry, country life, and, more rarely, on politics and patriotism were expressed in a plain style, with an occasional ecstatic flourish inspired by her love for "the sweet, simple things of life which are the real ones after all." A work ethic inherited from her Puritan forebears, which exalted labor and self-improvement not merely for their material rewards but as moral values, was, she believed, the key to happiness. Mrs. Wilder, however, wasn't entirely happy with her part-time career, or with her obscurity. In 1930, she sat down with a supply of sharpened pencils—she didn't type—to write something more ambitious: an autobiography.

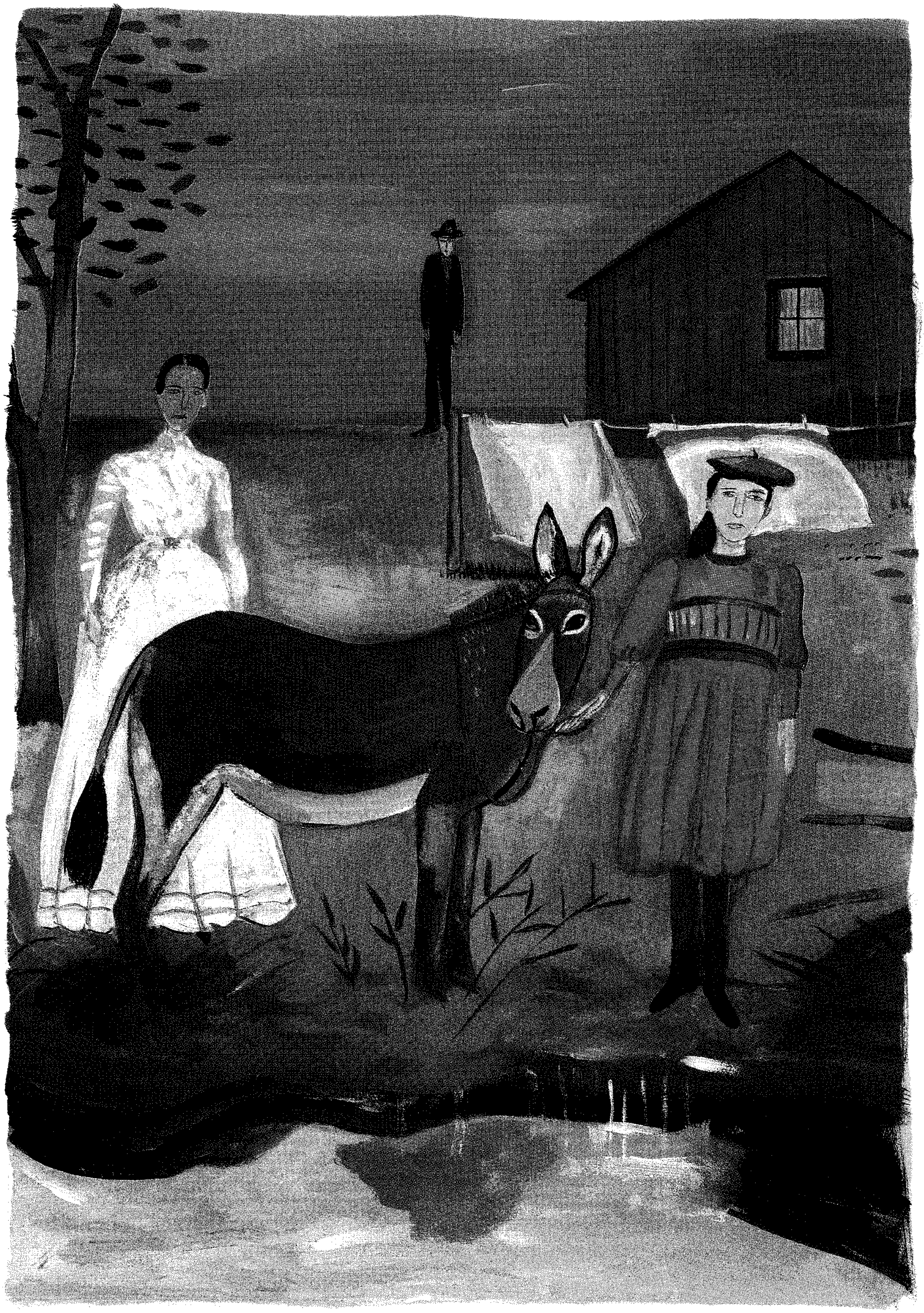
Laura Ingalls was born in the sylvan wilds near Pepin, Wisconsin, in 1867, and she grew up on the frontier, in the various log cabins, claim shanties, sod dugouts, and little frame houses that her inveterately restless father, Charles, built for his wife and daughters each time he bundled them into a covered wagon and moved on, mostly westward, in search of an elusive prosperity. While the Ingallses were living outside the town of De Smet, in what is now South Dakota, Laura met her future husband, a laconic homesteader ten years her senior. Almanzo Wilder, whom she called Manly, had raised horses as a farm boy in Malone, New York, and he owned the finest team in town—two beautiful brown Morgans. When De Smet was cut off from supplies by a winter of record cold and relentless blizzards that buried the railroad tracks, he and a friend had risked their lives to buy grain from an outlying farmer who was rumored to have a reserve. They barely made it back, in a whiteout, but they saved their neighbors from starvation.

Almanzo and Laura started courting when she was fifteen. By that time, she was helping to support her family by teaching school (she was younger than some of her students) and working as a part-time seamstress. Her elder sister, Mary, had gone blind after an illness diagnosed as "brain fever," which may have been caused by measles or meningitis. Carrie, the third-born, was thin and sickly. Grace was the baby. Laura had always been the sturdy one, pleasant-looking but no beauty, her father's favorite, and something of a tomboy who occasionally showed flashes of defiance. Almanzo was the town hero, and Laura had a rival for his affections, yet she treated him coolly. After her death, in 1957, Laura's qualms about a life like her mother's surfaced in an unpublished manuscript. Caroline Ingalls was a woman of some education and gentility who had also taught school before marrying a pioneer. (The only relics of her former life were a treasured figurine—a china shepherdess—and her love of fashion and poetry.) "Sweet are the uses of adversity" was, perhaps by default, her working motto. She rose before dawn to stoke the fire and boil the bathwater. She fed her family with whatever she had. She made all their clothes and linens, recycling the scraps for her patchwork quilts. She baked the bread, churned the butter, blacked the stove, and restuffed the pallets that they slept on with fresh hay. Even when it was twenty below, she did the washing for six people, pressing with heavy flatirons laundry that had frozen stiff. When her husband was away on some urgent survival mission (Laura recounted how he once walked three hundred miles to find work as a field hand), she fetched the wood and pitched feed to the horses, then waited up for his uncertain return, knitting in her rocker. Informed summarily that she would be packing up, yet again, to start over in a new wilderness, she protested feebly but acquiesced.

Laura waited until she was eighteen, in 1885, before she agreed to marry Almanzo. Their daughter arrived a year later. She was named for the wild roses on the prairie where she was born.

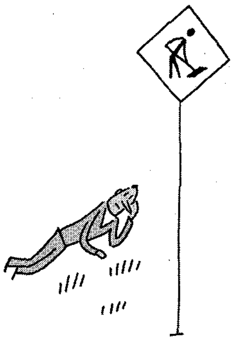
The book business, hard hit by the Depression, was cutting back drastically, and a first draft of Wilder's memoir, "Pioneer Girl," was passed over by several agents and publishers, who felt that it lacked drama. But she persisted—less interested, she later said, in the money than in the prestige of authorship—and when Virginia Kirkus, an editor of children's books at Harper & Brothers, received a new version of the material, now recast as a novel aimed at readers between the ages of eight and twelve, she bought it. That "juvenile" (as such chapter books were quaintly called), "Little House in the Big Woods," was the first volume of an American family saga that has since sold about sixty million copies in thirty-

ABOVE: PHILIPPE WEISBECKER; OPPOSITE: MAIRA KALMAN



Laura Ingalls married Almanzo Wilder in 1885. Their daughter, born a year later, was named for the wild roses on the prairie.

three languages. During last year's Presidential campaign, when a journalist from the *Times* asked Heather Bruce, Sarah Palin's sister, about the candidate's reading habits as a child in Wasilla, she mentioned only one book, "Little House on the Prairie," the third and best known of the eight novels that Wilder published in her lifetime. It describes the Ingallses' migration from Wisconsin to Kansas, where they build an illegal homestead on land reserved for the Osage tribe, and suffer a series of Job-like tribulations: predation by wolves and panthers, a prairie fire, malaria, blizzards, menacing encounters with the Indians, and a near-fatal well-gas accident. None of it crushed their spirits or shook their belief in self-reliance, although the story ends on a bitter note—one that Governor Palin might have recalled. Charles learns from a neighbor that federal troops are coming to evict the settlers. The "blasted politicians in Washington" have betrayed them, and, without waiting to be run off "like an outlaw," he abandons the little house in a rage. In the last scene, with his family camped by its wagon in the high grass, he gets out his fiddle. "And we'll rally round the flag boys," he sings. "We'll rally once again / Shouting the battle-cry of Freedom!" Ma shushes him—it's too martial a song for the girls, who are half-asleep, but "Laura felt that she must shout, too."



In 1974, "Little House on the Prairie" was loosely adapted as a television drama, which ran for nine seasons. It was said to be Ronald Reagan's favorite program. After it went off the air, the actors reunited to make three "Little House" films. Melissa Gilbert, who played the young Laura, grew up in the role from the age of ten to eighteen, and last year she played Caroline in a musical based on the books, which opened at the Guthrie Theatre, in Minneapolis, and begins a national tour in September at the Paper Mill Playhouse, in Millburn, New Jersey. The farmhouse at Rocky Ridge now receives some forty thousand visitors annually. It is one of seven historical sites and museums—in New York, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, South Dakota, and Kansas—devoted to the series and its lore. (Last autumn, the Kansas museum, which bills itself as "The Little House on the Prairie," was sued for trademark dilution by the company that produced the series. A spokesperson for the museum—which is owned by the television personality Bill Kurtis and his sister—says that it declined a cash offer to change its name. The case is pending.)

Wilder scholarship is a flourishing industry, particularly at universities in the Midwest, and much of it seeks to sift fiction from history. The best book among many good, if more pedestrian, ones, "The Ghost in the Little House," by William Holtz, a professor emeritus of English at the University of Missouri, explores a controversy that first arose after Wilder bequeathed her original manuscripts to libraries in Detroit and California. It is the work of a fastidious stylist, and, in its way, a minor masterpiece of insight and research. Holtz's subject, however, isn't Laura Ingalls Wilder. It is her daughter and, he argues, her unacknowledged "ghost," Rose Wilder Lane.

By the time that Laura published her first book, Rose was a frumpish, middle-aged divorcée, who was tormented by rotten teeth and suffered from bouts of suicidal depression, which she diagnosed in her journal, with more insight than many doctors of the era, as a mental illness. For more than a decade, she had earned a good living with what she considered literary hack work for the San Francisco *Bulletin*, its rival, the *Call*, various magazines, and the Red Cross Publicity Bureau. She had published commercial fiction, travelogues, ghost-written memoirs, and several celebrity biographies. Charles Ingalls's granddaughter had inherited his wanderlust, and her career had given her a chance to indulge it. Much of her reporting had been filed from exotic places. She had lived among bohemians in Paris and Greenwich Village, Soviet peasants and revolutionaries, intellectuals in Weimar Berlin, survivors of the massacres in Armenia, Albanian rebels, and camel-drivers on the road to Baghdad.

In 1928, she had come home to Rocky Ridge for an extended visit with her aging parents, whose income she subsidized. They were so used to denying themselves basic comforts that they threatened to have their electricity cut off, even though they no longer needed to live so austerely, and Laura's martyrdom, as Rose saw it, was a reproach to her own way of life. "My mother can not learn to have any reliance upon my financial judgment or promises," she wrote to a sometime lover. "Where is perseverance, thrift, caution, industry—where are any of the necessary virtues? Simply not in me." She grandly spent eleven thousand dollars to build Laura and Almanzo a new fieldstone house—an "English cottage"—which they didn't want, and she bought them a Buick, which Almanzo drove into a tree.

The transformation of a barefoot Cinderella from the Ozarks into a stylish cosmopolite who acquired several languages, enjoyed smoking and fornication, and dined at La Rotonde when she wasn't motoring around Europe in her Model T is, like the Little House books themselves, an American saga. Rose's published writing was sensationalist, if not trashy, but her letters and her conversation were prized for their acerbic sophistication by a diverse circle of friends which included Dorothy Thompson, a leading journalist of the day; Floyd Dell, the editor, with Max Eastman, of *The Masses;* Ahmet Zogu, who became King Zog of Albania; and Herbert Hoover, despite the fact that he had apparently tried to suppress an embarrassing hagiography that Rose and a collaborator had cobbled together in 1920. (He hadn't yet entered electoral politics, but he was widely admired for his postwar relief work in Europe.) Hoover was not unique among Rose's subjects in deploring her fabrications. Charlie Chaplin was so incensed by them that he threatened legal action, as did Jack London's widow. Henry Ford repudiated a portrait of himself that he couldn't recognize. Laura, who publicly (and disingenuously) insisted that her stories were pure autobiography, also sometimes balked at the liberties that her daughter took with factual detail. Fidelity to a subject, or to history, was of less importance to Rose,

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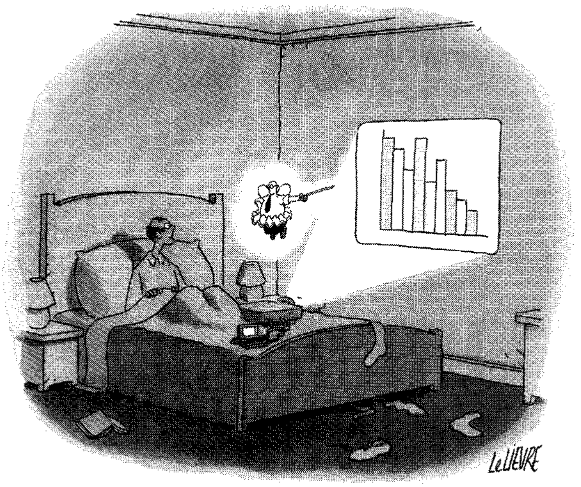

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of gratitude) to suggest
merited the accusations,
ı she accepted Rose's ex-
ifts and literary labors on
ith a sense of entitlement
re like a child's than like a
ose, in her less aggrieved
could admit that Mama
h no fault of her own, had
laughter. Whatever their
ents, they kept them from

h school, Rose left home
telegraph operator, and in
ok a job in San Francisco.
ure whether or not she had
her future husband, Claire
e, a newspaper reporter her
venty-two—but they mar-
ater. She became pregnant
ınd lost the infant, a boy.
, she informally adopted a
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ards the gifts of maternal
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ıad reckoned on her hus-
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d), and was hired as an as-
Bulletin. The editor, Fre-
a legendary newsman and
on crusader, became Rose's
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Little House books fulfill its purpose as defined by Horace: "to entertain and to inform." Mother and daughter essentially divided that labor. One has to suspect that the delicious minutiae of the books' famous how-to chapters on molding bullets, pressing cheese, digging a well, making a rag doll, drying plums, framing a house, and smoking a ham, among dozens of daily activities, were mostly Laura's contribution. (In my favorite of many Christmas scenes, little Grace gets an elegant new coat and hood, *trimmed in swan's down*; her father shot the bird, her mother cured the skin and did most of the sewing, and her older sisters pieced out the lining from scraps of blue silk.) It was what Laura knew, loved, and had proved, in her columns for the *Ruralist*, that she could write about.

Q

Q belonged to Q.&A.,
to questions, and to foursomes, and fractions,
it belonged to the Queen, to Quakers, to quintets—
within its compound in the dictionary dwelt
the quill pig, and quince beetle,
and quetzal, and quail. Quailing was part of Q's
quiddity—the Q quaked
and quivered, it quarrelled and quashed. No one was
quite sure where it had come from, but it had
travelled with the K, they were the two voiceless
velar Semitic consonants, they went
back to the desert, to *caph* and *koph*.
And K has done a lot better—
29 pages in Webster's Third
to Q's 13. And though Q has much
to be proud of, from Q.& I. detector
through quinoa, sometimes these days the letter
looks like what medical students called the
Q face—its tongue lolling out.
And sometimes when you pass a folded
newspaper you can hear from within it
a keening, from all the Q's who are being
set in type, warboarded,
made to tell and tell of the quick and the
Iraq dead.

—*Sharon Olds*

Rose had proved that she could romanticize whatever material she was given. She did some minor tinkering with "Pioneer Girl," but, once it was decided to fictionalize the memoir as a children's story—the idea had come from an editor who rejected the memoir—she took a more aggressive role. It varied in intensity from book to book, but she dutifully typed up the manuscript pages, and, in the process, reshaped and heightened the dramatic structure. She also rewrote the prose so drastically that Laura sometimes felt usurped. "A good bit of the detail that I add to your copy is for pure sensory effect," Rose explained in a letter.

John Miller, a thorough biographer and historian who, like Holtz, compared the manuscripts with the published texts, came to a different conclusion about the collaboration. In the introduction to his book "Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder," he writes, "Wilder demonstrated a high degree of writing competence from the beginning, and her daughter's contribution to the final products, while important, was less significant than has been asserted." (The four pages of manuscript that he reproduces arouse more questions than they settle, however. In Laura's scribbled margin notes to Rose—points of fact about geography—she misspells definite as "deffinite" and remarks that her husband "don't remember" the distance between two towns.) A concise, recent biography by Pamela Smith Hill, "Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Writer's Life," is more overtly partisan. Hill accuses Rose of insensitivity to her mother's "imaginative vision," and, at times, of arrogance, condescension, bullying, self-aggrandizement, and even plagiarism. (Rose secretly wrote an adult novella of her own, "Let the Hurricane Roar," which was widely admired and sold briskly. The substance and characters were pillaged from "Pioneer Girl." Laura apparently never read the book, and considered it a betrayal.)

The cumulative evidence suggests that sometimes Laura stood her ground and sometimes she was cowed into submission, but most often she solicited and welcomed Rose's improvements. When Rose left the farm, in 1935, the editing of the five books yet to come was done by correspondence. "I have written you the whys of the story as I wrote it," Laura told her in a letter that accompanied a draft of volume four, "On the Banks of Plum Creek," "but you know your judgment is better than mine, so what you decide is the one that stands." Rose, for her part, could be an insufferable didact. She played down her authority, even as she hammered it home: "I'm trying to train you as a writer for the big market," she had told her mother in 1925. (Laura had written an article about her Ozark kitchen, which, heavily revised, had appeared in the magazine *Country Gentleman*.) "You must understand that what sold was *your* article, *edited*. You must study how it was edited, and why. . . . Above all, you must *listen* to me."

"Little House in the Big Woods" was a great success, critically and commercially. Seven months after it was published, Franklin Delano Roosevelt defeated Herbert Hoover. His victory bitterly dismayed the Wilders—Rose, in particular. Shortly after the Inauguration, she noted in her journal, "We have a dictator."

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Wilders, along with other disillusioned pioneers, had briefly rallied to the incendiary populism of William Jennings Bryan. By the middle of the decade, Rose had become a follower of Eugene Debs, the union organizer and Socialist candidate for President. In her days as a bohemian, she had flirted with Communism. Laura was a Democrat until the late nineteen-twenties; after the First World War, she served as the local secretary of a national loan association that dispersed federal money to farmers, and as the chairwoman of her county's Democratic Committee. But, ultimately, both women's experience of adversity—or their selective recall of it—made them less sympathetic to the homeless and the jobless. "The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number," Rose argued in a letter to Dorothy Thompson, "will obviously be reached when each individual of the greatest number is doing the greatest good to himself."

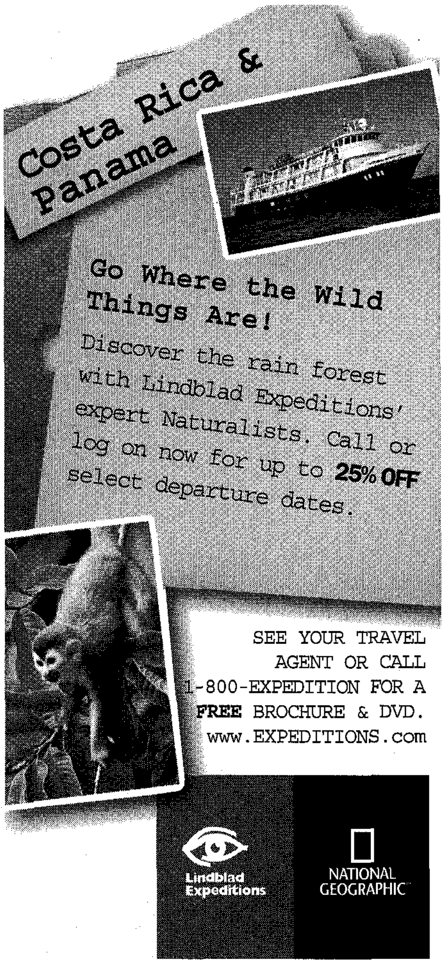
Laura had kept in touch fitfully with her sisters, and when she began to research her childhood they sometimes provided details that she'd forgotten. Mary had died in 1928, but Grace, a farmer's wife, and Carrie, a journalist, were both still living in South Dakota—Grace and her husband receiving welfare and surplus food. Nevertheless, from Rocky Ridge, the predicament of the urban poor was a remote abstraction, and the Wilders blamed rural poverty on the Democrats' support, as they saw it, of industry at the expense of agriculture. They opposed legislation that compelled farmers to plow crops under as a strategy for price support. Miller writes that, according to Rose, Almanzo was ready to run off an agent from the Agriculture Department with a shotgun, telling him, "I'll plant whatever I damn please on my own farm." In 1943, the year that Laura published "These Happy Golden Years" (the final installment of her saga), she told a Republican congressman from Malone, New York, "What we accomplished was without help of any kind, from anyone."

The Wilders had, in fact, received unacknowledged help from their families, and the Ingallses, like all pioneers, were dependent, to some degree, on the railroads; on taxpayer-financed schools (Mary's tuition at a college for the blind, Hill points out, was paid for by the Dakota Territory); on credit—which is to say, the savings of their fellow-citizens; on "boughten" supplies they couldn't make or grow; and, most of all, on the federal government, which had cleared their land of its previous owners. "There were no people" on the prairie, Laura, or Rose, had written. "Only Indians lived there." (Hill writes that Wilder agreed to amend the sentence when an outraged reader objected, calling it "a stupid blunder." It now reads, "There were no settlers.")

In 1936, the *Saturday Evening Post* published Lane's own "Credo," an impassioned essay that was widely admired by conservatives. Her vision was of a quasi-anarchic democracy, with minimal taxes, limited government, and no entitlements, regulated only by the principle of personal responsibility. Its citizens would be equal in their absolute freedom to flourish or to fail.

Everything that Lane wrote after "Credo"—fiction or polemics—was an expression of that vision. She may have been the first to invoke the term "libertarian" (it dates to the eighteenth century) to describe the agenda of a nascent anti-statist movement of which she has been called, with Isabel Paterson and Ayn Rand, "a founding mother." To the degree that she is still remembered for her own achievements, it is mainly by a few libertarian ultras for whom her tract of 1943, "The Discovery of Freedom: Man's Struggle Against Authority," is a foundational work of political theory. (It was written "in a white heat," she said.)

The struggle against authority defined Rose's life. She railed against a mother who had infantilized her (even though she returned the favor), and at a President who, she believed, was infantilizing a free republic. ("I hoped that Roosevelt would be killed in 1933," she wrote to her agent, George Bye, who also represented Eleanor Roosevelt.) She fought a valiant losing battle for the psychic freedom necessary to write something authentic, yet she was beholden to her parents for her greatest literary successes. In 1938, Rose serialized "Free Land," a novel set on the Dakota plains, whose central character was modelled on Almanzo. It reached the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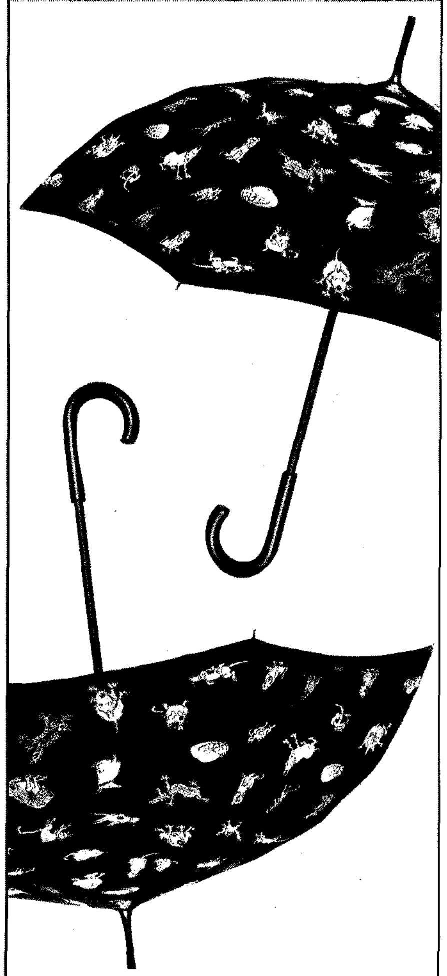

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best-seller list, and a reviewer in the *Times* recommended it to the Pulitzer Prize committee. But, once Rose had exhausted her family history, her creative life was finished. Her last attempt at fiction, in 1939, "The Forgotten Man," is the story of a working-class hero whose ingenuity has been thwarted by the New Deal. When it was rejected by an editor as artless propaganda, Rose, according to Holtz, argued that she "could not write it otherwise."

By then, Lane had moved East. In 1938, at fifty-one, she bought three suburban acres near Danbury, Connecticut, and a clapboard farmhouse—her first real home. (Remodelling, she told a friend, was "my vice.") As she aged, her inner and outer worlds both contracted. She abandoned her journal and, with it, Holtz concludes, her introspection. Old friends were alienated by her increasingly kooky and embattled militance. (One of them described her as "floating between sanity and a bedlam of hates.") The F.B.I. took notice of her "subversive" actions to protest Social Security, and she made headlines by denouncing the agency's "Gestapo" tactics. She talked about reducing her income to a bare minimum, so that she wouldn't have to file taxes. During the Second World War, she found an improbable new pulpit—a column, "Rose Lane Says," in the Pittsburgh *Courier*, a progressive African-American weekly. In 1943, convinced that wartime rationing would lead only to inefficiency, she denounced it to her readers, and, to make the point that a determined individualist could live off the grid, she arranged with her neighbors to share a cow, a pig, and some chickens, and she canned the produce from her garden. Two hours from Manhattan, she was re-creating her parents' life.

The Wilders were a long-lived family. Almanzo died in 1949, at ninety-two; Laura in 1957, at ninety; and Rose in 1968, at eighty-one. She bequeathed her literary estate to Roger Lea MacBride, her "adopted grandson" and political torchbearer. (He ran for President on the Libertarian ticket in 1976.) Among the papers of mother and daughter was the draft of a novella that Wilder had mentioned in a letter of 1937: "I thought it might wangle a little more advertising for the L. H. books if I said I might write the grown up one," she told Rose. "You could polish it and put your name to it if that would be better than mine."

At some point soon afterward, Laura did set down the story of her experience as a bride and a young mother, but she abandoned it. That was the manuscript that was found after her death; in 1971 MacBride published it, without revisions, as "The First Four Years," and it is now marketed as volume nine in the Little House series. But Laura's instincts were right. The writing is prissy and amateurish; the heroine is bigoted and obsessed with money. It is too simplistic for an adult reader, and too mature for a child. In slightly more than a hundred pages, there isn't even a glimmer of the radiant simplicity that draws one to the Little House books.

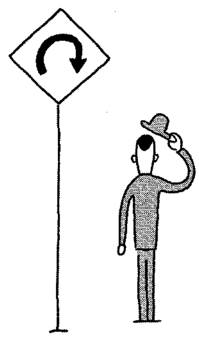
Last June, Anita Clair Fellman, a professor emerita of history at Old Dominion University, in Norfolk, Virginia, published "Little House, Long Shadow," a survey of the Wilders' "core" beliefs, and of their influence on American political culture. Two streams of conservatism, she argues—not in themselves inherently compatible—converge in the series. One is Lane's libertarianism, and the other is Wilder's image of a poster family for Republican "value voters": a devoted couple of Christian patriots and their unspoiled children; the father a heroic provider and benign disciplinarian, the mother a pious homemaker and an example of feminine self-sacrifice. (In that respect, Rose considered herself an abject failure. "My life has been arid and sterile," she wrote, "because I have been a human being instead of a woman.")

Fellman concludes, "The popularity of the Little House books . . . helped create a constituency for politicians like Reagan who sought to unsettle the so-called liberal consensus established by New Deal politics." Considering the outcome of the November election, and the present debacle of laissez-faire capitalism, that popularity may have peaked. On the other hand, it may not have. Hard times whet the appetite for survival stories. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

In the Kitchen, *by Monica Ali (Scribner; $26.99).* Gabriel, a chef from the North of England, dreams of his own restaurant, but is resigned to proving himself in a busy London hotel. Meanwhile, a death in the hotel basement exposes the precarious existence of the undocumented immigrants who take on the unglamorous work that makes everything run smoothly, and Gabe finds himself entangled with a young Belarusan woman forced into prostitution. Ali has taken on a number of big ideas: mental health, immigration, the bubble economy. But the novel wears its influences—"Kitchen Confidential," anti-slavery reports—heavily, and many of the characters feel more like object lessons than like personalities. The feeling is only heightened by some cliché-ridden prose: "They had to dance on their toes today, and that was the truth. He wasn't taking a bullet for anyone."

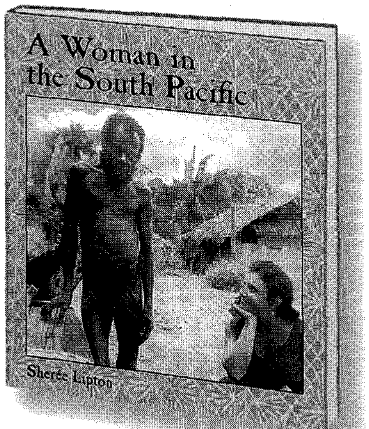
I'm So Happy for You, *by Lucinda Rosenfeld (Back Bay; $13.99).* The hapless, too-eager-to-please heroine of Rosenfeld's new novel is an ill-paid editor at an obscure leftist journal who secretly resents her husband for abandoning his job to write a sci-fi screenplay and for failing to get her pregnant. No wonder she thrills to the travails of her best friend, a suicidal beauty who has always overshadowed her but is now languishing in a dead-end affair. Then, to her chagrin, her friend meets Mr. Right. The book's confectionery veneer belies a heart of poison, as Rosenfeld tartly dispels the cherished chick-lit notion that female friendship conquers all. Equally ruthless is her sendup of overachieving New York women in feral pursuit of have-it-all motherhood without having first ascertained if they even like children.



The Age of Wonder, *by Richard Holmes (Pantheon; $40).* Known for his biographies of Romantic writers, Holmes turns his attention to the science of the Romantic Age, and demonstrates the extent to which the era's scientific and literary endeavors enriched each other and were animated by common ideals. Holmes begins with Joseph Banks, the official botanist on Captain Cook's 1768 voyage to Tahiti, whose diaries of this paradisiacal island made him a scientific celebrity. Elected to serve as the president of the Royal Society, Banks championed, among others, William Herschel, a composer and self-taught astronomer who discovered the planet Uranus; Mungo Park, a Scottish doctor who embarked on a perilous journey through Africa seeking the riches of Timbuktu; and Humphry Davy, a self-taught chemist and poet who invented a safety lamp for miners. Holmes shows the impact of such discoveries on writers like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, whose responses, he contends, helped create a mythology of discovery that is still with us today.

Fordlandia, *by Greg Grandin (Metropolitan; $27.50).* In 1927, Henry Ford purchased a tract of land in the Brazilian Amazon roughly the size of Connecticut, with the intention of growing rubber for his automobile factories. During the next eighteen years, Ford invested a quarter of a billion dollars (in today's money), but Fordlandia, as the place came to be known, was a spectacular failure, its plantations supplying less than one per cent of the world's latex. In spite of this, the town had a golf course, movie theatres, Cape Cod-style shingled houses, and sidewalks dotted with fire hydrants. A "work of civilization," in the words of one American associated with the project, it was Ford's attempt to export the small-town virtues that his own assembly lines were breaking down in the United States. Grandin gives an exhaustive account of the project's failure and of the light it sheds on Ford; disastrously, he was reluctant to hire native naturalists, who could have best advised him on growing rubber in the region.

An Extraordinary Coming-of-Age Memoir



"The former cannibal king of Amok…puffed on his pipe and said agreeably that he had married ten and eaten many."

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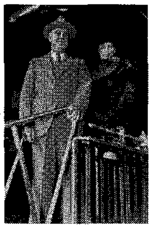

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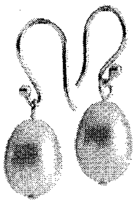

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MUSICAL EVENTS

INFINITE PLAYLIST

New frontiers in digital sound.

BY ALEX ROSS

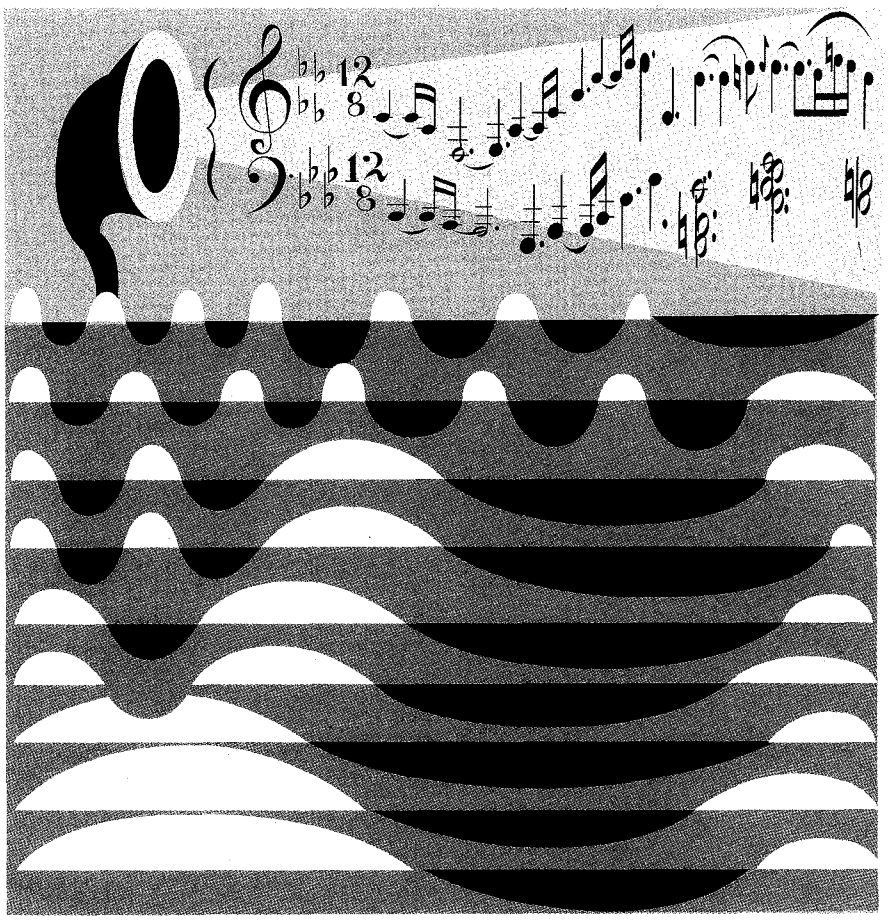
The other day, with a few clicks on my computer keyboard, I travelled in time to 1943. On November 28th of that year, Arturo Toscanini led the NBC Symphony in orchestral excerpts from the Wagner operas. A remastering of the performance is available from the Web site Pristine Classical, which offers historic recordings in various downloadable formats. I selected a CD-quality version, paid with a credit card, and within minutes had gone into the golden age of radio. Ben Grauer, whose cosmopolitan-Everyman voice epitomizes the era, spoke for a few moments, introducing the program as the "General Motors Symphony of the Air" (or "Ahre," as he put it). Then the Prelude to Act III of "Die Meistersinger" began, in strikingly vivid sound, the cellos lamenting with rounded tone. Few recordings from the period before magnetic tape have such presence. The well-drilled brilliance of the NBC orchestra comes through, as does Toscanini's passion for Wagner, whom the Nazis had tried to annex as propaganda, and whom the Maestro was imperiously taking back.

The man who runs Pristine Classical is Andrew Rose, a British-born audio expert who works in a French village. A few years ago, he helped to expose fake CDs by the late British pianist Joyce Hatto, demonstrating that they were digitally manipulated copies of other pianists' work. Rose's technique isn't entirely free of digital hocus-pocus; he reëqualizes old disks to give them a more lifelike sound, using more recent recordings of the same repertory as reference points. Crackle and hiss drop away; the bass grows richer, the treble less shrill. You get a sense of air around the music, of a concert-hall ambience. Rose admits that the process, which he developed two and a half years ago, is a tricky one. "It's a powerful, potentially dangerous way of approaching a recording," he told me. Some purists insist that the imperfections of the original should be left intact; others say that Rose applies his method indiscriminately.

Yet the gain is substantial. In the case of the Toscanini broadcast, Rose has pushed the old tape past the border at which an artifact becomes a living document. Hooked on the sensation, I spent days browsing Pristine's archives, relishing the newly robust sound of such classic recordings as Bruno Walter's 1952 "Das Lied von der Erde," with Kathleen Ferrier; Willem Mengelberg's 1939 version of Mahler's Fourth, probably as close as we can get to Mahler himself conducting; and Mengelberg's swaggering 1941 take on Strauss's "Ein Heldenleben." Rose has also reworked some early jazz and blues tracks; Skip James delivers "Devil Got My Woman" with spooky immediacy, twanging strings and all. The whole time, I felt a degree of psychic unease. How far will the cleansing of history go? Will it be possible to enhance Caruso so that he sounds as if he'd been recorded yesterday? Fortunately, Rose leaves enough extraneous noise to remind us of the remoteness of the past.

By now everyone is accustomed to extracting music from the Internet, but until recently the only practicable online format was the MP3, which compresses the original in the interest of saving space. For a long time, music sites supplied MP3s that transmitted data at a hundred and twenty-eight kilobits per second; this omits about ninety per cent of the data found on a CD. Everything came out sounding a little scrawny—not so bad if you're getting the Sex Pistols but unfortunate for Mahler. The latest hard drives can accommodate hundreds of gigabytes of information, meaning that file size is less of a concern. And classical listeners can finally shop online without fear of having their Mahler emasculated. Internet-based labels like Pristine let you choose among higher-quality MP3s, "lossless" files (nothing is lost from the CD), and versions that exceed the CD standard. HDtracks.com, which has ties to many leading independent labels, presents a similar range of wares. Several organizations that maintain their own labels—the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Tallis Scholars—offer high-end downloads. And Deutsche Grammophon now sells lossless files in its online shop.

At HDtracks, I secured the recent Harmonia Mundi release "Song of Songs," in which the British choral group Stile Antico sings Renaissance settings of the Songs of Solomon. Having admired the CD, I now had the equivalent of a studio master tape: twenty-four-bit audio sampled at a rate of eighty-eight thousand slices per second. The elegant entangling of voices seemed clearer, though I can't say that the difference was staggering. The staggering thing is the music itself: an immaculately engineered recording of pure-voiced singers, bringing to life several of the loveliest compositions of the past thousand years. Clemens non Papa's radiant motet "Ego Flos Campi"—"I am a flower of the field and a lily of the valley"—is around four hundred and sixty years old, and if Toscanini's Wagner undermines our sense of the distance of the past Clemens obliterates it. Early on, the tenors extend the word "valley" in a string of eighth notes, a quickening of the line that leads to a more luxurious stasis. In whatever format, it is perhaps the most ravishing sound I have heard this year.



Classical listeners can now download recordings that match or exceed CD quality.

RICHARD McGUIRE

For a century or so, the life of a home listener was simple: you had your disks, whether in the form of cylinders, 78s, LPs, or CDs, and, no matter how many of them piled up, there was a clear demarcation between the music that you had and the music that you didn't. The Internet has removed that distinction. Near-infinity awaits on the other side of the magic rectangle. Video and audio stream in from around the world. The other day, I watched Karol Szymanowski's "King Roger," in an interestingly horrible new production from the Paris Opéra (courtesy of the European arts channel Arte); took in Mahler's Ninth at the Proms (courtesy of BBC 3); and then bought a virtual seat in the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, which had an HD video of Simon Rattle conducting Robert Schumann and Bernd Alois Zimmermann, the agility of the camerawork outdoing the robotic "Great Performances" standard. (Berlin's harp-cam is especially cool.)

But these meandering journeys across the Internet soundscape can be taxing. The medium too easily generates anxiety in place of fulfillment, an addictive cycle of craving and malaise. No sooner has one experience begun than the thought of what else is out there intrudes. Putting on an old-fashioned disk and letting it play to the end restores a measure of sanity. This may explain why the archaic LP is enjoying an odd surge of popularity among younger listeners: it's a modest rebellion against the tyranny of instant access.

Despite the fact that I now have forty days and eighteen hours of music on my computer, enough to outlast the Flood, I keep returning to a stack of favorite disks that I keep next to my stereo. I'm listening to "Simple Lines of Enquiry," an immense, glacial, hypnotic piano work by the Canadian composer Ann Southam, on Centrediscs; a survey of the starkly eloquent harpsichord music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, with Glen Wilson, on Naxos; and "The Little Match Girl Passion," a compilation of choral music by the American composer David Lang, on Harmonia Mundi. Lang is a hard-driving minimalist who has lately taken an introspective turn. The principal work on the CD interweaves Hans Christian Andersen's tale with the Gospel According to Matthew. In "For Love Is Strong," pairs of voices slowly chant the title phrase while the rest of the chorus unfurls similes culled from the Song of Songs—"like the morning, like the moon, like the sun, like an army with banners," and so on. This is the text that captivated Clemens non Papa half a millennium ago. Lang's serene, limber music breathes much the same air, even if its angular repetitions are pure New York. The album ends with a hauntingly spare setting of lines adapted from Ecclesiastes: "People come and people go / the earth goes on and on." ♦

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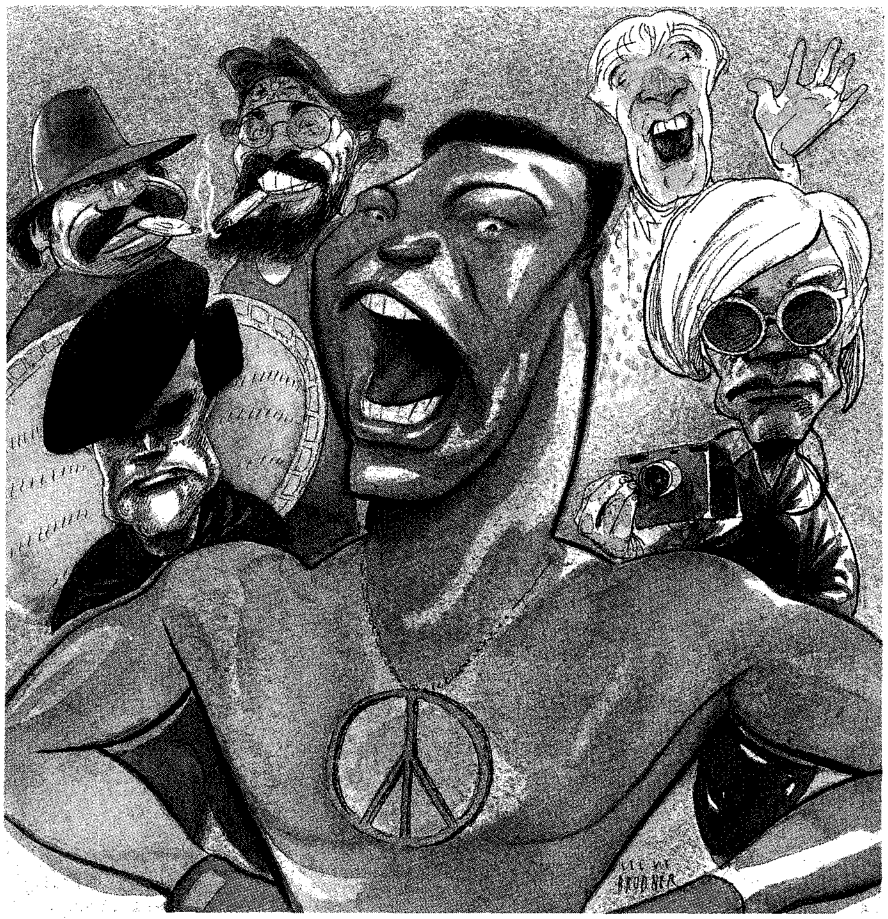
ON TELEVISION

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

Documentaries of decades past.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN



Bad boys: Iconoclasts of the nineteen-sixties and seventies on VH1.

Every time you turn around, or, more accurately, turn to face the TV, a big anniversary of some historical or cultural event is being celebrated. Were there always this many anniversaries? Why does it seem as though the twentieth, thirtieth, fortieth anniversary of Woodstock comes around every single year? Is there really a good reason for all this commemoration, and, even if there is, is there a way to make it stop? Of course there isn't, and, as media platforms multiply, more and more content is needed to fill them, and taking note of anniversaries or entire decades is an easy enough way to fill programming holes, and to appear smart, sort of. So in five years, and five years after that, look for a commemoration of the Twitter revolution, hosted by Ashton Kutcher, and then, at some point farther (I'm hoping really, really far) in the future, a commemoration of the anniversary of Kutcher's birth. Ideally, anniversaries provide genuine opportunities, for revisiting, say, a choreographer's or a composer's work and for introducing new generations to the creative wonders of the past. They are also opportunities to clear away the junk: with each new layer of art, history, invention, the temptation to generalize and the need to sort out and organize the clutter of our culture grow stronger.

Over five successive nights this month, beginning on August 10th, VH1 will show a series of hour-long documentaries called "Lords of the Revolution," highlighting iconoclasts of the nineteen-sixties and seventies: Muhammad Ali, Cheech and Chong, the Black Panthers, Timothy Leary, and Andy Warhol. On the final night, August 14th, a new documentary about Woodstock—which has forty candles on its cake this year—will be shown (and will air again on the History Channel the following Monday). If your first response to the prospect of these shows is cynicism and dread, that is largely due to VH1's approach to popular culture, which is to put it all into a blender, purée it until you can't tell one ingredient from another, and feed it to boy ironists (and the occasional girl), who then spit the mixture up against the wall for their—and, supposedly, our—amusement. Under the leadership of Michael Hirschorn, who was VH1's head of programming from 2001 to 2008, such offerings included "I Love the 80s," "I Love the 70s," "100 Greatest One Hit Wonders," and "100 Greatest Kid Stars"—compendiums of clips and snide comments about the songs, fads, catchphrases, and celebrities of the not-so-distant past. Such shows alternated, increasingly, with reality series featuring self-deluded contestants vying for the affections of unhinged but wealthy celebrities (VH1 is hardly alone in airing such shows, of course), and spinoffs of those shows—"The Surreal Life" begetting "Flavor of Love," begetting "I Love New York," begetting "I Love Money." My problem with VH1 in the past decade or so isn't that these shows are trash—I think they are, but I also know that one person's trash is another person's treasure, or doctoral thesis, and I did, after all, last summer, declare my love for the ABC game show "Wipeout"—but that the levelling they engage in seems total and joyless, and they often border on minstrelsy. Even more than the reality shows on other networks, the ones on VH1 appear to be saying, "My, aren't blond bimbos and undereducated minority people amusing?" No one has ever been able to tell me what he or she liked about these shows, beyond laughing at the people in them. In an interview in the New York *Observer* a couple of years ago, Hirschorn, who went to Harvard and has a master's degree in comparative literature from Columbia, was for a time the editor of the music magazine *Spin*, and writes about culture for *The Atlantic*, said that he grew up in a self-consciously cultured home where the only TV he was allowed to

STEVE BRODNER

watch was Jacques Cousteau and "Masterpiece Theatre." Like Scarlett O'Hara, filled with life-affirming resolve at the end of the Civil War, he rose up from the poverty of middle-class standards, stared at the ratings numbers twinkling in the heavens, shouted, "As God is my witness, I'll never be tasteful again!," and set fire to his parents' beige public-television tote bag.

For all VH1's hollow clamor, it does produce some programs that don't cop a nihilistic or snickering attitude, and "Lords of the Revolution," which was green-lighted during Hirschorn's tenure, is one of them. The documentaries aren't great—and the series title, other than serving to underscore that this is an all-male enterprise, is idiotic. None of the films are definitive, but they are a good introduction to their subjects. People to whom this material is new will learn a few things and be shocked by some of it—as will people who were around then but still find it hard to believe that the country lived through the events of the late sixties and early seventies. The series was written by Martin Torgoff, who has been writing books and making films about sex, drugs, and rock and roll for thirty years; he co-wrote the 1987 documentary about Elvis Presley called "Elvis '56" and wrote last year's VH1 series "Sex: The Revolution," which he also narrated. (I wasn't able to watch the latter when it aired and haven't sought it out since. Really, I've seen enough of Hugh Hefner in a robe.) In "Lords of the Revolution," Torgoff doesn't try to link the five subjects of the films and doesn't draw any conclusions. Undermining that strength, though, is the lack of pre-history in most of the documentaries. Still, that, at least to some extent, can be a strength as well: you can't really explain where a Cassius Clay or an Andy Warhol comes from. You probably can explain where a Timothy Leary comes from, but it doesn't matter as much; you end up thinking that even though Leary was, as everyone is, a singular person, whatever he achieved or stood for had a lot to do with the fact that there was something a little wrong with him—something missing. (Catch the deranged smile on his face as he is being taken to prison; it may remind you of a certain sociopath you don't want to be reminded of.) His grandiosity kept him going, and that momentum enabled him to ride the big wave of history.

There probably isn't a piece of footage of Muhammad Ali that doesn't bear repeated viewing; and an ancillary benefit of documentaries about boxing, even if you have no interest in the sport (or, if such a thing is possible, less than no interest), is the famously delicious language used by its chroniclers. Describing on camera the fall that George Foreman took after a decisive punch by Ali in the 1974 Rumble in the Jungle (the subject of the excellent 1996 film "When We Were Kings"), Jerry Izenberg, of the Newark *Star-Ledger*, said, "George Foreman fell in sections. His ankles fell, his shins fell, his—that's a lot of man to fall." You might not have seen it that way—but, after Izenberg says this, you do. The documentary focusses on the two tracks that Ali ran on: his journey to boxing greatness and his journey to Islam, which led him to change his name, refuse the draft, and become a loud, funny, implacable, unbendable, unstoppable symbol of black liberation. His story feels truncated, partly because his life lost some dimension once Parkinson's disease began to take its toll on him, but the film makes its point: Ali blew everyone away—both those who were willing to be blown away and those who weren't.

Oddly, the show that follows Ali is not the one about the Black Panthers but the one about Cheech and Chong. (Perhaps the producers thought that viewers might like to pause for a smoke, as it were, between the courses of Black Power.) I never found Cheech and Chong's humor funny; it always seemed to me that they thought they were funny, and this made them even less so. Plus, they were real stoners, not comedians who played stoners, which makes it hard to judge how much control or discernment they brought to the bumbling in their act. The history of their two-man rainbow coalition—Cheech Marin was a Latino from Los Angeles, and Tommy Chong was half Chinese and from Canada—is more interesting and twisty than their material is, and, although they did bring pot into the mainstream through their records and movies, they arguably did nothing to advance the discussion of decriminalization. Watching this documentary, you don't really have the sense that you're watching history. You just feel that you're listening to two guys who think that a joint the size of a bolster pillow is the funniest thing ever.

The Black Panthers episode, however, may rock your world, regardless of your age; the footage of a group of militant armed black men walking, unimpeded, into a session of the California State Assembly seems surreal, absolutely impossible, and it calls up a range of feelings that don't sit comfortably together: fear of the Panthers, fear for them, uncertainty as to how much your own race and status play into your judgments about the rightness of their cause and their means of achieving it. There's a diligently neutral tone to the writing in this episode (as there is in Richard Belzer's narration), which renders the scenes even more effective: you're completely on your own when it comes to making sense of the violence committed in the name of justice.

"Woodstock: Now & Then," directed by Barbara Kopple, is an occasionally annoying film, a mixture of footage from the event and interviews with people who were there. But it's redeemed by the telling details that it teases out from the organizers, backers, and crew, which show us the many happy (and unhappy) accidents that made the festival possible and the spirit of improvisation that kicked in when more people than were expected showed up and when a deluge occurred one afternoon. The film scrutinizes the conventional wisdom about the weekend, and the efforts of mainstream media outlets to present it as a disaster, and, in the end, it does give you a sense of the moment. Kopple also addresses, with a fairly light touch, the question of authenticity, when she shows several scenes of kids playing old-time rock and roll at one of the branches of the Paul Green School of Rock. (There's nothing like a pre-teen singing "Hope I die before I get old," with all the Who-ish posturing down pat, to make you think about authenticity.) For some good reasons, though, and some sentimental ones, too, you stop questioning the authenticity of Woodstock itself when you discover why Kopple chose a certain couple as interview subjects. The answer is too good to give away, but it does, whether or not you're so inclined, make you believe in magic. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

LIGHTENED LOADS

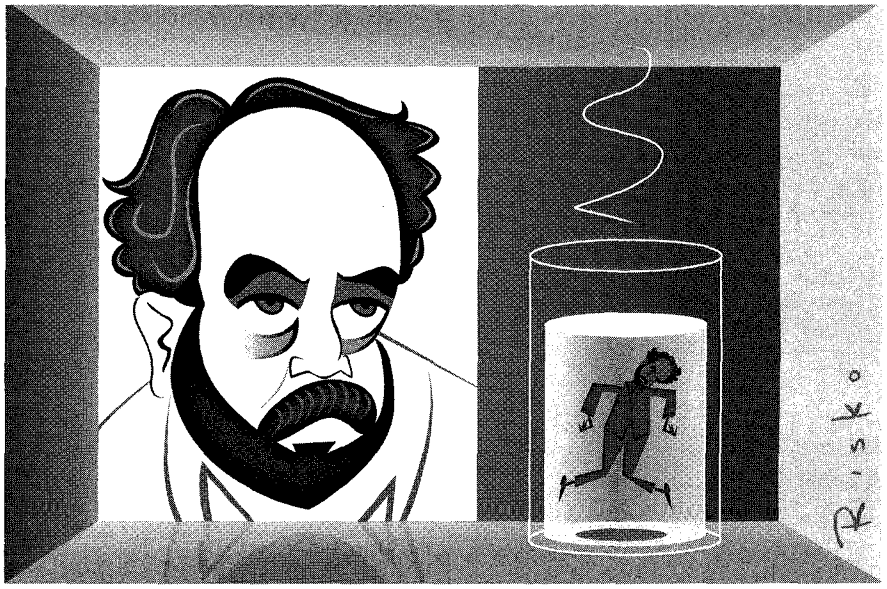
"Cold Souls" and "Not Quite Hollywood."

BY ANTHONY LANE

In the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Jesus asks his disciples, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If the disciples offered a reply to this, it is not recorded. In any case, the first question is rhetorical, although some of us will take a lifetime to discover, to our consternation, just how much truth it tells. To the second question, however, "Cold Souls" has an exact answer; namely, a credit card.

Paul Giamatti, who is never going to be mistaken for Danny Kaye, plays himself—or, rather, he plays a convincing version of himself called Paul Giamatti, a slumped and grouchy actor who is wrestling with the title role in a New York production of "Uncle Vanya." Feeling mired in the part, and fearing that it appeals all too strongly to his own ponderous mood, he decides to lighten up. This entails a trip to Roosevelt Island: a buoyant one, aloft in the tram, as if the process of disburdening had already begun. Once there, he visits the Soul Storage company, which, for a fee, will extract your immortal soul and keep it under refrigeration, like a side of beef, for as long as you require. The head of the outfit, Dr. Flintstein (David Strathairn), explains the options: "Your soul will be stored here, or, if you'd rather avoid sales tax, it can be shipped to our New Jersey warehouse."

I must admit that, when this kind of conversation is dished up, I can't get enough. To take a big, bewildering concept and treat it as a small, scuffed item of everyday use demands the kind of wit—literate and levelling—with which recent movies have all but dispensed. For too many directors, the merest hint of sci-fi means a possible end of the world, with a hero nicely poised to save the day; for Sophie Barthes, the writer and director of "Cold Souls," Paul's great loss doesn't even mean the end of his *job*. On the contrary, he is freed up to ham his way through Chekhov with unfeigned delight, and he must be the first Vanya on record who not only admires Professor Serebryakov's wife but cops a feel of her ass. You can't help wondering, at such times, what the function of a soul might be: is it a fancy name for the superego—a shackle on untoward behavior, waiting to be unlocked? It may be more of a confusing agent, given that without it, as Dr. Flintstein says, "everything becomes functional and purposeful." Is that why the obedient citizens of totalitarian regimes are said to be soulless?



Paul Giamatti plays an actor named Paul Giamatti in Sophie Barthes's new movie.

We never get a straight answer to that, or to any metaphysical query, and, frankly, Paul doesn't seem too different after extraction. This means that "Cold Souls" will leave many viewers deflated, especially those who believe, like Aristotle, that the soul is an animating life force, or who pride themselves on its grandeur. Cheer up, guys: this is a comedy, not a philosophy lesson, and thus richer in bafflement than in understanding. We may not know what Paul's soul consists of, but we do get to see what it looks like: a poor, pale squib of a thing, no bigger than a molar, in a glass jar. "Just because it's small doesn't mean anything," Dr. Flintstein says, like a sex therapist, but Paul is unassuageable. "Are you telling me that my soul is a *chickpea*?" he asks. Worse is to come, when his chickpea goes AWOL. We learn that souls are being harvested in Russia and smuggled to America inside soul mules—tough, hard-featured types like Nina (Dina Korzun), whose fortunes we follow in parallel with Paul's. She steals his soul from storage and conveys it to St. Petersburg, where the lion-maned wife of a rich Russian has requested the soul of an American actor. She demands Johnny Depp's or Sean Penn's, and she *thinks* she has Al Pacino's; but all she gets is Paul's, and the roll of his eyes, in that sad-sack face, when he learns of her wish list is the funniest thing in the film. He, in turn, still needing help with his Chekhov, asks to be implanted with the soul of a Russian poet. He receives one from a lonely female factory worker, who traded it illegally for cash, as if it were a kidney. And now she wants it back.

The great coup of "Cold Souls" is that we accept all this without demur, as we do the presence of Clarence the angel in "It's a Wonderful Life," or the fuzz in which a disoriented Robin Williams, in Woody Allen's "Deconstructing Harry," goes out of focus. So confident is Barthes in her conceit, and so downbeat is the attitude of her performers, that the element of fantasy all but evaporates. Paul learns

ROBERT RISKO

about soul storage from an article in this magazine, and I seriously considered checking the archives. Lines of dialogue that we've heard a hundred times acquire the gleam of urgency; Paul's wife (Emily Watson) asks, "Is there someone else?," to which the answer is yes, though in a more deeply compromising way than she can imagine. How do you tell your wife that you're lying in bed with a Russian woman inside you? And when, in despair, he demands of Nina, "Just tell me where the hell my soul is," before flying to St. Petersburg to retrieve it, he doesn't sound like a truth-seeker or a flake. He sounds like the rest of us on a Tuesday morning, stuck in traffic.

Credit is due to the director of photography, Andrij Parekh, who also shot "Half Nelson" and "Sugar," and in whose hands the various townscapes, in Russia and America alike, come across as muted and unadorned. Neither superpower, under Paul's rheumy gaze, looks like anything special. I actually wanted the movie to hold even steadier; the camera sometimes gets the minor shakes, in that hovering, ready-to-pry fashion that is de rigueur nowadays, whereas, if you hark back to a fabulist like Buñuel, his wildest inventions were all the more coruscating for being filmed with a tranquil eye. "Cold Souls" has its flaws, and it threatens to sag into a Paul-like morbidity, but Giamatti's anxious mien and unspectacular shamblings have never been better deployed. In the words of Vanya, when he is described as "a shining example" by his mother, "I've been an example of something all right, but I haven't exactly shone." In its portrait of an ordinary man struggling to refresh his disappointments, "Cold Souls," for all its futuristic gizmos, pays fonder tribute to Chekhov than anything since Louis Malle's radiant "Vanya on 42nd Street," of 1994. "I began it forte and finished it pianissimo," Chekhov remarked of his play, and Sophie Barthes does much the same, closing her tale not with a bang but with two distant figures wandering on Brighton Beach: twin souls, you might call them, but that would be asking for trouble.

Soul is not the first ingredient that we associate with exploitation movies, and the recipe we find in "Not Quite Hollywood" feels bracingly traditional. This is a documentary, directed by Mark Hartley, about the lower reaches of the Australian film industry in the nineteen-seventies and early eighties, which were driven by the unabashed conviction that cars exist to be trashed, breasts to be revealed, and arteries to be sliced. The titles alone would have found favor with Roger Corman: "Deathcheaters," "Pacific Banana," and "The Day After Halloween." Australians tipped in some flavors of their own, starting with outback locations and fauna, and ending with a critical response to match. Where else would you hear a film reviewer demand that a producer and all his works "should be burned to the ground and his ashes sown with salt"?

There is also the delicate matter of the stuntmen, or as they are, of course, referred to, stunnies. The most insane of them, Grant Page, whom we first see here as a nun on fire, turned up to film "Mad Max" with limbs already broken but proceeded to drive anyway, with his leg in plaster. "He's still *alive,*" a marveling Jamie Lee Curtis, who worked with him in "Roadgames," says. She was one of a bundle of stars, including Stacy Keach and a barely sentient Broderick Crawford, who were imported to lend glamour and bulk to the local product. There were justified grumbles about this, but then the whole Oedipal saga, as Hartley's title suggests, tells of a young industry glancing with envy, mimicry, bullishness, and scorn at the patriarchal practices of Hollywood. The documentary also sneers at the high-end Australian features of the period, especially "Picnic at Hanging Rock," but a less rambunctious survey might have asked if the two camps were quite so opposed; a film like "The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith" (1978), though hardly less extreme in its setting and violence than the mindless "Turkey Shoot" (1982), was thoughtful enough to enfold such brutality into a study of colonial suppression. (It is glimpsed for a second here, unmentioned by name, and then misspelled in the credits.) What is more, although "Not Quite Hollywood" was clearly put together with fanatical love, the suspicion remains, as often with genre cinema, that these trash-rich movies are a lot more fun to hear about, and to watch in snatches, than to sit through. I am not *that* sorry to have skipped "Howling III: The Marsupials," but it is surely a matter of eternal regret that Nicole Kidman failed to win the lead role. As the director explains, "She just wasn't werewolf enough." You can say that again. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
The Front Row, a blog about movies.

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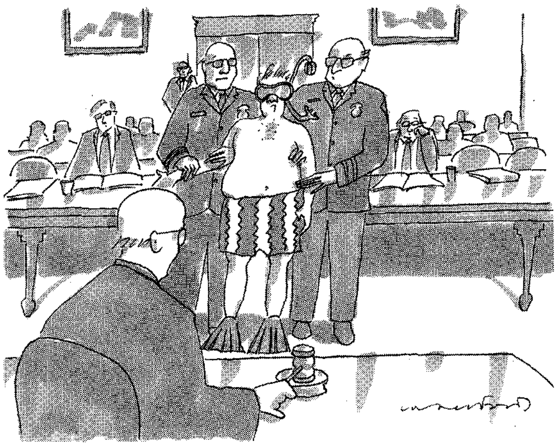
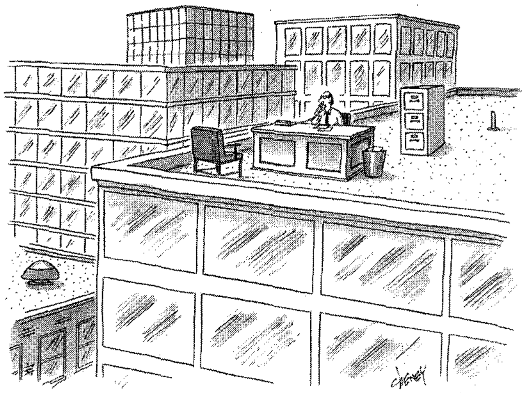
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Paul Noth, must be received by Sunday, August 16th. The finalists in the July 27th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 31st issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the U.S. or Canada (except Quebec) age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Go ahead, waterboard me."
Lester Craft, Jr., Basalt, Colo.



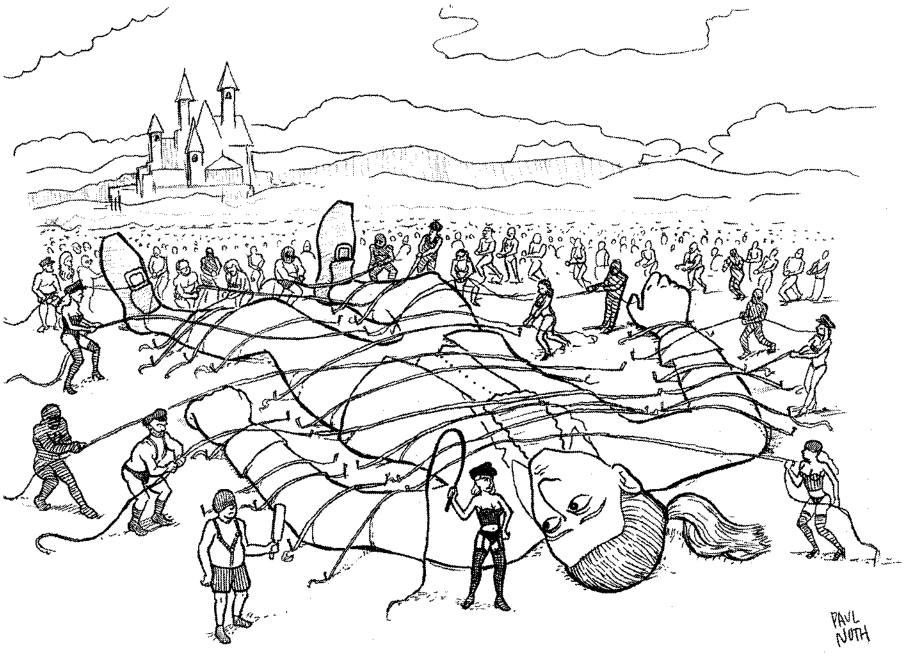
THE FINALISTS

"Maybe we should do the firings in the basement?"
Jeffrey Valacer, Fort Lee, N.J.

"They said the complaint box was anonymous."
Elizabeth Herman, Newton, Mass.

"Let's meet in my office, weather permitting."
Henry Von Kohorn, Westport, Conn.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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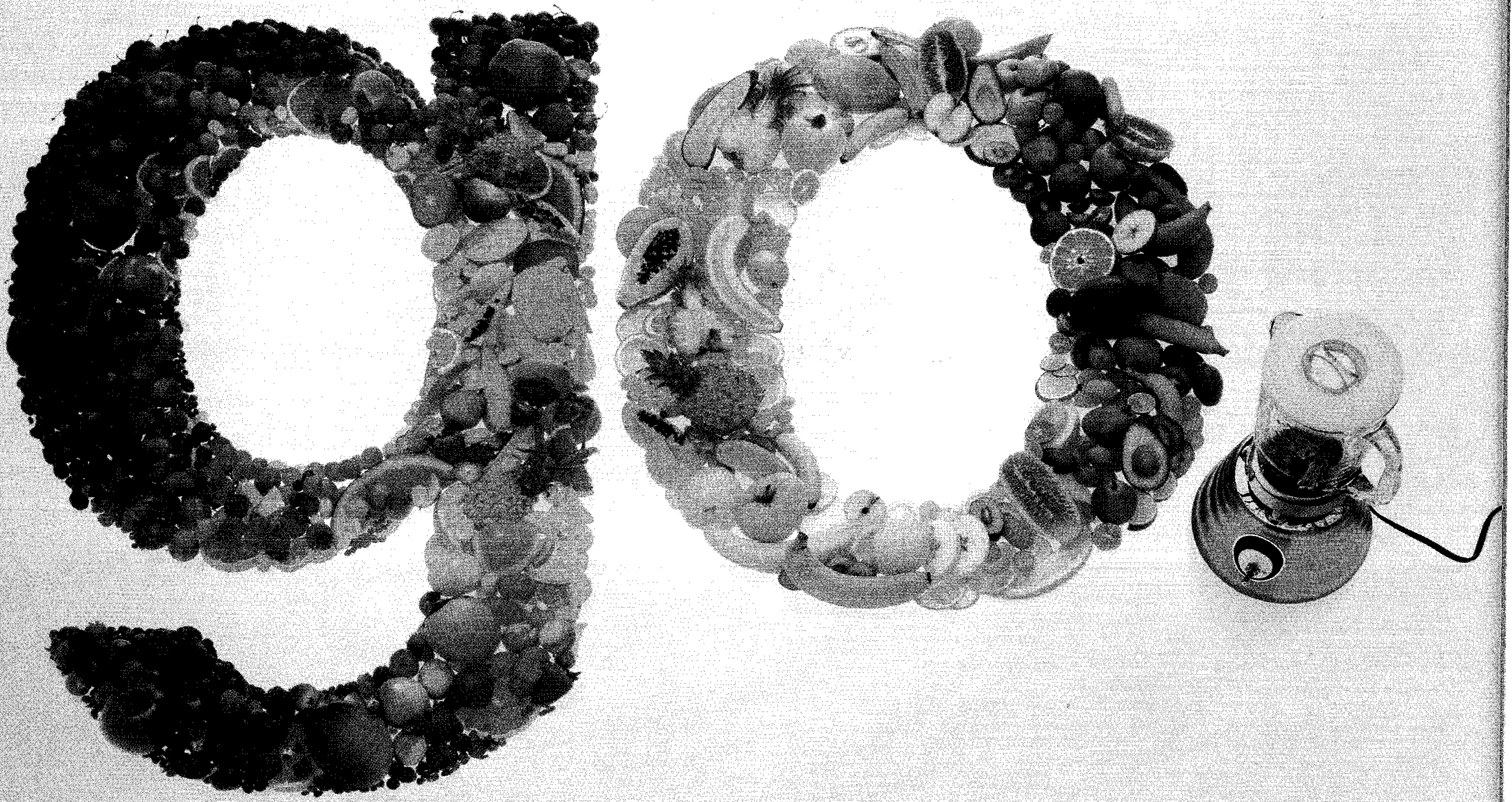
do your taste buds deserve a tropical vacation?



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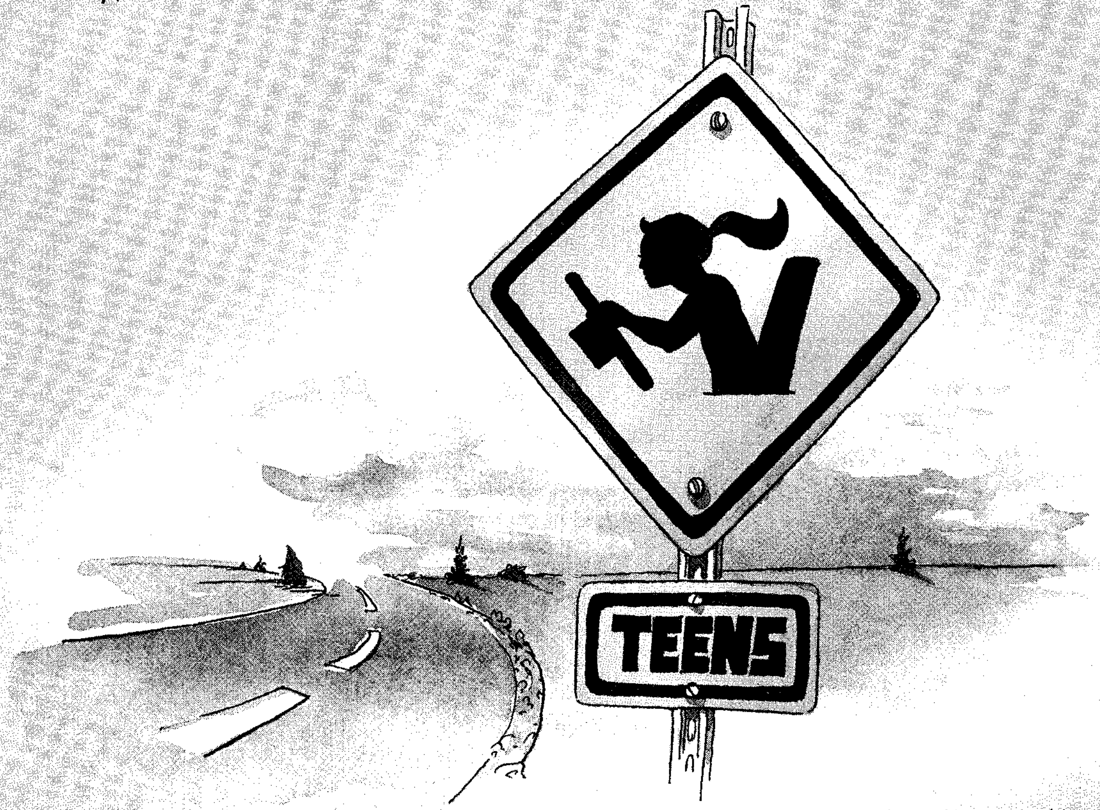

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*The STANDUP Act is the Safe Teen And Novice Driver Uniform Protection Act of 2009.

Sources: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Fatality Facts 2007; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Online] (2008). The Cupped Hands logo is a registered service mark and "That's Allstate's Stand" is a service mark of Allstate Insurance Company, Northbrook, IL.

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